



**This electronic thesis or dissertation has been  
downloaded from Explore Bristol Research,  
<http://research-information.bristol.ac.uk>**

*Author:*

**Davies, Diane Marie Annette**

*Title:*

**Interpreting the gesture, sensing the sign : a comparative case study analysis of the effects of changes in theory and practice on A-level Shakespeare teaching in English literature and theatre studies.**

**General rights**

Access to the thesis is subject to the Creative Commons Attribution - NonCommercial-No Derivatives 4.0 International Public License. A copy of this may be found at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/legalcode> This license sets out your rights and the restrictions that apply to your access to the thesis so it is important you read this before proceeding.

**Take down policy**

Some pages of this thesis may have been removed for copyright restrictions prior to having it been deposited in Explore Bristol Research. However, if you have discovered material within the thesis that you consider to be unlawful e.g. breaches of copyright (either yours or that of a third party) or any other law, including but not limited to those relating to patent, trademark, confidentiality, data protection, obscenity, defamation, libel, then please contact [collections-metadata@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:collections-metadata@bristol.ac.uk) and include the following information in your message:

- Your contact details
- Bibliographic details for the item, including a URL
- An outline nature of the complaint

Your claim will be investigated and, where appropriate, the item in question will be removed from public view as soon as possible.

VOLUME TWO:  
APPENDICES

	PAGE
APPENDIX A: CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS 1990 - 1991	
SPRINGFIELD GRAMMAR SCHOOL, TEACHER A - LESSON A	1
LESSON I	7
LESSON II	11
LESSON III	13
LESSON IV	15
LESSON V	17
LESSON VI	20
LESSON VII	22
LESSON VIII	24
LESSON IX	25
LESSON X	28
LESSON XI	31
TEACHER B: LESSON I A	34
LESSON II A	35
LESSON III A	38
LESSON IV A	42
LESSON V A	43
LESSON VI A	45
LESSON VII A	47
LESSON VIII A	48
LESSON IX A	51
LESSON X A	54
LESSON XI A	56
LESSON XII A	59
LESSON XIII A	61
LESSON I B	64
LESSON II B	66
LESSON III B	69

LESSON IV B	70
APPENDIX B: CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS 1990 MYRTLE SCHOOL: TEACHER C, LESSON I B	74
APPENDIX C: CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS 1991 - 1992 ALMA GRAMMAR SCHOOL: TEACHER D, LESSON I C	80
LESSON IIC	83
LESSON III C	86
LESSON IV C	89
LESSON V C	91
LESSON VI C	94
LESSON VII C	95
LESSON VIII C	96
LESSON IX C	97
LESSON X C	98
LESSON XI C	100
LESSON XII C	101
LESSON XIII C	103
LESSON XIV C	106
LESSON XV C	109
LESSON XVI C	111
LESSON XVII C	113
LESSON XVIII C	118
LESSON XIX C	120
LESSON XX C	122
LESSON XXI C	125
LESSON XXII C	126
LESSON XXIII C	128
LESSON XXIV C	130
COMEDY OF ERRORS WORKSHOP	132
LESSON XXV C	137
LESSON XXVI C	139

LESSON XXVII C	141
LESSON O	143
LESSON XXVIII C	144
LESSON XXIX C	147
LESSON XXX C	149
LESSON XXXI C	151
APPENDIX D: FURTHER COMMENTS FROM STUDENTS RESPONDING TO THE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE	154
APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW WITH JOHN SALWAY	155



APPENDIX A - CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS 1990-91

To facilitate analysis of this lesson, and the lessons to follow, certain classroom exchanges have been abbreviated as follows:

TS = Teacher statement	SS = Student statement
TQ = Teacher question	SQ = Student question
TR = Teacher response	SR = Student response
TA = Teacher affirmation	SA = Student affirmation
TRD = Teacher re-direction	SRD = Student re-direction
TC = Teacher challenge	SC = Student challenge
OC = Observer Comment	

These categories of classroom exchange do not by any means encompass the whole of teacher-student interaction: they have been devised with the intent of highlighting the specific ways in which knowledge and meaning are negotiated in the classroom environment.

All references to Othello from The Arden Shakespeare, ed. M. R. Ridley, first published as a University Paperback 1965; reprinted fourteen times; reprinted 1986.

All references to The Tempest from The Arden Shakespeare, ed. by Frank Kermode, first published as a University Paperback 1964; reprinted fifteen times; reprinted 1987

All references to The Comedy of Errors from The Arden Shakespeare, ed. by R.A. Foakes, first published as a University Paperback 1968; reprinted three times; reprinted (London: Routledge) 1991

All references to As You Like It from Signet Classic Shakespeare, ed. by Albert Gilman, (New York: New American Library

\*\*\*\*\*

Springfield Grammar School

Field Notes - Lesson A

Teacher: Teacher A

Level: Year 7 -(First Year); Age range 11-12 years

Sex distribution: Fourteen boys, eleven girls.

Racial Mix: Predominantly white: one black boy, one black girl, one Asian boy.

Time: 8:50 - 10:05 am, Friday 16 November, 1990

I arrive five minutes early and wait outside the classroom door with the gathering students. They are a lively and talkative bunch, busily enjoying the few free minutes before classwork must begin. The school uniforms that they wear are relatively casual; any combination of black or grey trousers or skirts with white shirts, and black or green sweatshirts or jumpers, some bearing the school logo. The boys do not wear ties. Colourful book bags and knapsacks abound, enlivening the otherwise rather drab school dress. Formidable looking trainers appear to be a "fashion must" among this group. They chatter among themselves, to the best of my knowledge fairly oblivious to my presence.

The head appears out of the main office and does a turn: the military bearing and commanding voice serve him well: "Line up properly! I want to see shirts tucked in and no chewing!" A culprit is discovered and ordered to empty his mouth. As 8:50 strikes there is no bell- students pass into their classes and await the arrival of the teachers. Two girls come running down the hall and told by the head to "Go back and walk!", which they do.

[OC:I am left with the impression that the head is firm but fair- clearly his authority is respected, not resented.]

Once inside the class, it becomes clear that the group is (perhaps voluntarily) sexually segregated. Virtually all the boys sit at the front of the room, very near the teacher's desk, at tables seating two to five students. The girls are clustered near the back- one boy and girl sit next to each other at a table at the very back of the class- the rest seem to have taken pains to avoid any proximity to the opposite sex. The classroom itself is bright and well lit, with large windows along the right hand wall, and students' art work and writing colourfully displayed on a bulletin board along the back wall. There is a rolling blackboard at the front, behind the teacher's desk, with the remnants of a German language lesson half erased on the exposed face of it. While waiting for the teacher to arrive, several of the boys bounce their pens noisily on the tables, some splaying one hand on the desk while bouncing the pen between the fingers rhythmically.

The teacher arrives bearing a load of Signet editions of The Tempest, some paperback, some hardback. As she passes these out to the class, several of the students express their distaste:

SS1: Shakespeare? I hate Shakespeare!

SS2: This is going to be boring!

SS3: Aw, Shakespeare-NO WAY!

TQ/C: How do you know that it's boring until you know what it's about?

She then proceeds to apologize for the state of the books:

TS: There will be writing all over these books- people who study the play for A-level have to make a lot of notes about it when they read it. Try not to pay any attention to the writing in the margins as we read this.

As this particular group of students is finishing up some work on a "monster" unit, the teacher has elected to introduce them to Shakespeare via Caliban:

TS: We're not going to read the whole of this- we're going to read the bits about a monster. His name is Caliban- who is a servant to a man called Prospero- he is a magician; he is the master of this creature Caliban.

She pauses here to write the names CALIBAN, ARIEL, PROSPERO, MIRANDA and SYCORAX on the board.

SR: Prospero- that's like prosperous.

TA: Yes, there is that sense about him.

SR: "Ariel- that's like Ariel automatic: you should write "automatic" after his name on the board."

TRD: No, it's not like Ariel automatic: this play was written long before that.

(There is at this point a brief interruption as a teacher from a neighbouring classroom enters to enquire about paper and books- apparently he has been left with neither. During this time, several of the students have begun to read the names of other characters in the play and talk amongst themselves about them. One boy ventures a guess that the other characters must be Spanish.

[OC:I sit and wait for the lesson to resume, turning over in my mind an image of housewives as Prosperos of the laundry room, with Ariel at their beck and call to produce a cleaner brighter wash...]

The lesson resumes and the teacher announces that they are going to read through bits of this play: she prepares them for the language:

TS: This play isn't written in conversation-it's written in poetry, so it doesn't sound like our everyday speech, but have a go-

They are far from discouraged by this, and several call out the names of characters they would like to be- Prospero, Ariel and Caliban chief among them. As the room is furnished with long, rather heavy and unwieldy looking tables, the possibility of moving them about to create any kind of "stage" area in the room is not a realistic one, so, understandably the reading out of parts is taken at their seats. She appoints four students to read- an Ariel, Prospero, Caliban and Miranda. It would appear that the students have been chosen for their facility in reading aloud, which, given the difficulty of the text, provides them with a challenge and the other students with the chance to hear a rather good approximation of an intelligent reading. Despite the occasional stumble over pronunciation, they carry on with a good deal of enthusiasm: the teacher is encouraging throughout- stopping to praise each individual reader as they venture the text. She does not, at this juncture, stop to explicate or correct individual words. They read aloud from I.ii. 189, Ariel's speech to Prospero, beginning "All hail, great master! grave sir, hail! I come/ To answer thy best pleasure ; be't to fly,/ To swim, to dive into the fire, to ride/ On the curl'd clouds,..." through the description of Ariel's manifestation of the storm at Prospero's bidding , stopping at line 214, at which point Ariel relates that "the King's son, Ferdinand,/ With hair up-staring, - then like reeds, not hair, - /Was the first man that leap'd; cried, "Hell is empty,/ And all the devils are here".

TQ: What's Prospero made Ariel do?

SR: Set the ship on fire?

TRD: He's made the ship wreck itself, but the magic is, no one will be hurt.

The same students continue reading aloud, stopping again at line 237, at which point the mariners are "Bound sadly home for Naples,/ Supposing that they saw the King's ship wrack'd,/ And his great person perish."

TQ: Can you make sense of that?

The students responses are tentative and confused. She goes back to the text and carefully and slowly explicates the lines, stopping at "Of the king's ship"

TC: See if you can sort this bit out for yourselves.

Several rather keen boys at the front of the class scramble for her attention and the opportunity to venture a response:

TA: Put down your hands: I know you know it. I want the others to figure it out. She calls on Christina , at the very back of the room. Christina answers correctly, and is praised. The same students are again instructed to continue with their reading aloud. They stumble somewhat through to line 292, at which point Prospero reminds Ariel "it was mine Art,/ When I arriv'd and heard thee, that made gape/ The pine, and let thee out."

TQ: What's the time o'th' day? What's the mid-season?

SR: Noon-it says so at the bottom of the page.

TRD: What kind of pictures do these words make you think of?

The students' perceptions of this are varied and lively: the ooze of the deep, the veins of the earth baked with frost, the wind and air: all of these images are pointed up by the teacher to a very enthusiastic response. When they continue with the reading, a few of the students who up until this point have been relatively detached from the class activity ask what page they're on so that they might begin to participate. The reading continues, still with the same students, to line 344; Caliban's protestation to Prospero, "For I am all the subjects that you have,/ Which first was mine own King: and here you sty me,/ In this hard rock, whiles you do keep from me/The rest o' th'island." The teacher stops to explain the events of 330-344; the evolution of the relationship between Caliban and Prospero which began tenderly and descended into bitterness. The students, who at the outset seemed quite impressed with Prospero by virtue of the fact that he was a magician, are beginning to express a changed opinion of him, and show a good deal of sympathy for Caliban, who they feel was hard done by. The reading aloud stops here , as the teacher would like to continue with the next activity- drawing their idea of Caliban- though quite a few are keen to continue reading aloud.

TQ: What does Caliban look like?

SR: The picture on the cover of the book?

The teacher passes out drawing paper, then takes up the books again to read through II,ii,18-40; Trinculo's comic discovery of Caliban - "What have we here? a man or a fish? dead or alive? A fish: he smells like a fish; a very ancient and fish-like smell;.."for a description of Caliban : the "fishiness" of Caliban is made clear by this.

(Two girls who have been out of the room during the reading of II,ii,18-40 return to their seats without incident or comment.)

The teacher walks about the room, looking at the works in progress, and stopping now and then to describe various Calibans she has seen in the theatre.

SQ: Can he have sideburns? Does he have a tail?

TR: Yes, he can have anything you like.

Two boys discuss a "brilliant" production of Midsummer Night's Dream that they have seen while they continue with their drawings. As the period draws to an end, the teacher reminds the students to bring in the Sunday colour supplements on Monday, together with their preliminary Caliban drawings, with an eye to creating large Caliban mosaics from the colour supplements.

[OC: I sneak a glance at several of the Caliban drawings while the students pack up their pencil boxes: it appears that the effect of introducing Caliban (as Shakespeare does) first within the context of the island's history and the emotionally charged issue of Caliban's claim to right of sovereignty, and then proceeding to the rather comical description of Caliban's physical appearance and smell, has been to elicit a very sympathetic response from the students: the great majority of their Calibans appeared to be very sad looking fish-like creatures.]

## Springfield Grammar School

## Field Notes - Lesson I

Teacher: Teacher A

Level: Upper Sixth, A-Level Revision; Age Range: [16 - 18]

Sex Distribution: Four Males, seven females

Racial Mix: White only

Time: 8:50 a.m., Monday, November 19, 1990

This classroom is housed outside of the main school building in a one-story avocado green cement structure, connected to the main school building by heating pipes and a ganglion of electrical wiring. The classroom itself is low ceilinged and small, with a cramped configuration of laminated tables arranged round the periphery of the room. It would appear that this room is also home to the Classics classes, as large drawings done in marker pens, depicting the Parthenon and Greek red figure vases in the British Museum, and a chart deciphering the Greek alphabet adorn the walls. There is a large teacher's desk at the front of the room, behind which is a wall-mounted blackboard, covered in Latin verbs.

As the students file into the class it becomes apparent that the school dress code, at least on this occasion, has been relaxed. The majority of students are wearing blue jeans; this would appear to be a privilege reserved for the upper school, as prior to entering the classroom, I witness the chastisement of an apparently younger student for wearing blue jeans. There is one male present in the class who appears to be considerably older than the rest of the students; 35-40. Whether he is a mature student or an observer I have yet to discover: at any rate, he alone among the rest of the students has come equipped with a copy of Romeo and Juliet, rather than Othello. Another of the boys is suffering from alopecia: both seem very comfortably integrated into the group.

These students have just finished reading Othello and are beginning a close reading, in preparation for A-level examinations. The nature of this first lesson necessitates that it take a lecture form.

The teacher enters and sits behind the desk. Pulling out an Arden edition of the play, she freely acknowledges her indebtedness to M.R. Ridley, from whose introduction she has gathered the bulk of her information. She begins by assigning an approximate date of composition- 1604-and giving the students a sense of chronology. She tells them that the play was written just after Hamlet, Much Ado about Nothing, Troilus and Cressida, and before Macbeth and King Lear. She stresses that they ought to have, especially at A-level, a sense of this chronology in terms of the tones and themes of the plays. Casting about for what plays they have studied, read, or seen prior to this one, she elicits these responses, placing each as it comes in relation Othello's composition date : Hamlet, A Midsummer's Night Dream, Romeo and Juliet, Julius Caesar, The Tempest. One girl offers that she has seen "One of the Richards, but I don't remember which." The teacher questions, "Did he begin as king, and end up deposed, or did he begin as duke and end up as king?" The girl replies: "I don't remember-it was that film one with Kenneth Brannagh." On being told that this was not a Richard, but Henry V, there is a burst of embarrassed laughter. The lecture continues. Naming a few of the later plays, she puts these into a chronological framework, talks about the growing concern for social order that predominates in the later plays. Shifting tack somewhat, she focuses now on "the emotion that suffuses the play- what is it?" Several students reply "Jealousy." She notes parenthetically that the source for the play, Cinthio's 1566 novella, is in Appendix I of their Arden editions, and advises that they consult the source and note the differences. She twice quotes Ridley's claim in the introduction that Othello's power as a piece of theatre lies in its "relentless and sustained grip upon the emotions" and elaborates upon this idea by calling the students' attention to the fact that the cast is small, by Shakespearean standards; effectively a "chamber" play, and therefore focused in such a way as to amplify the tension and pace. The play is not one peopled with royals, but rather with important people, whose relative nearness to the audience more readily provokes our sympathies.

Throughout this lecture, the students to various degrees appear to be assiduously copying down what is being said. The teacher does not rise to make any notes upon the board, but remains seated throughout. At this point she turns to the obviously older



student who is seated on her right who has offered that "his lecturer" made the comment that "Emilia is the most solid character in the play." She agrees, and then continues, noting how closely the play observes the unities, then asks to find out if the students are familiar with the concept of the unities, and gives a general explanation. Deferring again to M.R. Ridley, she notes his observation that in his opinion, in Othello, Shakespeare most closely resembles Webster. She then recommends that they read some Webster to have a sense of the difference in their vision. Referring specifically to The Duchess of Malfi, she describes in some detail the waxwork tableau, and the presentation of what is supposed to be Antonio's severed hand, concluding that in Webster's world, " we are left hanging in ways that Shakespeare does not let us hang."

At this point the lecture concludes and the students open their books and begin a line by line discussion of the play.

TQ: Why doesn't the appearance of Othello occur till I,ii?

SR1: Iago's more important.

SR2:He's plotting against him; we need to know the plot.

SR3: It's a way of introducing Othello.

TA/Q: That's a good thing to say about it- because what we think about Othello is coloured by the fact that what we know about Othello is what Iago tells us- we have to ask ourselves; Is that fair? What does that say about the world that they inhabit?

There is a brief, peripheral discussion on the description of Roderigo as "an exquisite", after which attention is turned back to the play. She reads out the first twenty lines of the play, then remarks off-handly that "Cassio always reminds me of computers now."

Focusing on the use of indefinite pronouns in these lines she asks:

TQ: "What is "this"? -Who is "he"? "him"?

The students variously supply the answers. She adds:

TS: "Intrigue and suspicion is being amplified by the use of these - there is a sense of overhearing, and the hate."

TQ: "What is the grudge?"

Again, the students variously supply the answers. She focus attention on line 11: "I know my price, I am worth no worse a place." with reference to Iago's grudge:

TS: "Look at the way that the rhetoric emphasises his sense of pride-to use that repetition - that is a fairly easy rhetorical trick to spot."

She illuminates the anatomy of Iago's grudge against Cassio, noting that at I,i 29 - "And I, of whom his eyes had seen the proof,/ At Rhodes, at Cyprus, and on other grounds,/ Christian and Heathen, must be lee'd and calm'd," land battles are discussed with images from naval warfare, and queries the class on the gloss on "ancient"; the older student offers that the ensign was, by virtue of his proximity physically in office on the battlefield, a trusted figure.

She stops here to comment on the production of Othello with Ian McKellan as Iago recently televised on BBC 2. Another student who has also seen this production adds that it was " So much better than the production at the (Bristol) Old Vic."

Arriving at line 40, "now sir, be judge yourself,/Whether I in any just term am affin'd/ To love the Moor.", she begins to consider the meaning and connotations of the word "moor" - what is good, bad, black and white in the context of this play, adding off-handly,

TS:It's good, it's groovy, it's fab!

Her colloquial enthusiasm throughout help to make the close study of the play a more accessible and less painful process for a clearly appreciative class.

They stop again to discuss the Bristol Old Vic production of Othello - Jack Klaff's performance as Iago in particular, and their experience of a post-production discussion of this with the actors. While they seem generally agreed that Jack Klaff was "terrible", one student offers the opinion that the production failed because Jack Klaff acted everyone else off the stage. They discuss the significance of Othello being played by a Black actor, and another student recalls that during that same post-production discussion at the Old Vic, Geoffrey Kisson, a Black actor himself, cast as Othello in the Old Vic production, offered that Othello should be played by a white actor, because the part was written for a white actor by a white playwright. He had also suggested that had Shakespeare been Black, he would have noticed different things about Othello. They discuss Othello's cultural isolation from the rest of the characters in the play, then turn their attention back to their books.

The teacher continues reading through to line 50; focusing attention again upon Iago, and the lines:

Were I the moor, I would not be Iago: In following him, I follow but myself.  
 paying once again particular attention to the rhetorical style employed here, and noting how Iago's ambiguity is pointed up by the balance and syntax of the lines themselves. As the period is drawing to a close, she concludes:

TS: "This is a play; this is not a novel-you must write about it as a piece of theatre. The AEB like it very much if you remember this while you're writing your exams: they'll say, " Well done! ".

They stop briefly to consider the meaning of I,i, 64 and 65:

But I will wear my heart upon my sleeve  
 For doves to peck at: I am not what I am.

with some discussion about the changing reception of these ideas over the years. The class concludes, and discussion is scheduled to continue on Wednesday afternoon.

## Field Notes - Lesson II

Teacher: Teacher A

Time: 2:20 pm, Wednesday, November 21 1990

Continuation of previous lesson- same class. PGCE student not present.

There is some confusion as the lesson fails to begin on time due to the fact that the classroom is inexplicably locked from the inside and out. The room must be entered through the adjacent classroom, around the opposite side of the building. Upon entering, the room feels uncomfortably warm. Despite the fact that the windows are wide open, they offer little relief, and the radiator valves would appear to be nonfunctional.

When the teacher arrives, she picks up directly where she left off:

TQ: What would you think of someone, who speaking of a third party, just talking amongst yourselves, would refer to someone as "thicklips"?

SR: It's a racist comment.

TA/TQ: So Roderigo is egging Iago on, fuelling his hatred by calling Othello "thick lips. What do you make of him calling Desdemona "his delight"?

No response immediately follows- she leaves this as food for thought, then draws their attention to line 83- Brabantio is at a window, Iago and Roderigo are below, Iago having roused Brabantio with:

Iago: Awake! what ho, Brabantio! thieves, thieves, thieves!/ Look to your house, your daughter and your bags./ Thieves, thieves!

Bra: What is the reason of this terrible summons?

Rod: Signior, is all your family within?

Iago: Are all doors lock'd?

TC: If you were directing this moment, how would you present this? what would you do? What kind of person is Brabantio? If you were directing him, what would you want him to look like? How might this [Brabantio's appearance] add to this scene in any way? What would this say about the relationship between Desdemona and Brabantio? It's adding these kinds of dimensions to your essays that will make the difference in your examinations.

She points to the depth of physical disruption in the line "Your heart is burst, you have lost half your soul." as being fundamental to the tragic mode. A student interjects:

SS: There's a very big sense of Desdemona as a possession - a jewel, a thing to be owned.

TA: Yes, there is a sense of Desdemona as a piece of goods, a chattel, something that can be bought and sold.

Skipping ahead to line 115, " I am one, sir, that come to tell you, your daughter,/ and the Moor, are now making the beast with two backs." she comments:

TS/Q: This is bitterly crude; bitterly harsh- Do you think you should be shocked by this?

The student response which follows, however, seems to be casting about for correctness, rather than confronting this crudeness head on:

SR: He uses a lot of animal imagery.

She continues along, asking numerous questions- owing primarily to the insufferable heat, the group is rather listless; the great majority of explications are delivered by the teacher without student comment, and questions that are thrown out to the group go for the most part, unanswered. Noticing this, she comments to one student in particular:

TS: you look confused - we're on page 12.

She proceeds to scene ii, with special investigation into Othello's first words, Iago's duplicity, the effect that this has upon our perception of Othello, as opposed to what Iago tells us; "Let him do his spite;/ My services, which I have done the signiory,/ Shall out-tongue his complaints-" On this speech she notes the measurement, balance, self-conscious phraseology and metre. This tone, she notes, will be useful to compare to the shifts in tone and attitude to come in later. She also makes a point of tying up the connections in the imagery of ships and treasure which mark Cassio's entrance. She notes, too, that when Brabantio call Othello a "thing" he is "making him a Caliban."

[OC:As the heat is truly oppressive, both for teacher and students, and there are only five minutes of class time left, they decide to talk instead about the to-do at the morning assembly about letters being sent home to the parents of sixth form students who have been seen smoking in front of younger pupils, the example it sets for these, the damage it does to the image of the school, not to mention the damage it does to the students' health. She prefaces her comments with "I'm preaching the party line here." This last five minutes, in terms of students' interest and participation is by far the most animated and lively period in the entire lesson.]

### Field Notes - Lesson III

Teacher: Teacher A

Time: 8:50 - 10:05 am, Monday 26 November, 1990

Continuation of previous class; PGCE student present.

There are four weeks left till the end of the term- as the teacher will be gone for the final week, that leaves them with three weeks- though as their 2,000 word extended essays are due by the end of next week, so far as the students are concerned, there are effectively only two weeks left with which to grapple with Othello. So today, for the sake of variety, and for the sake of covering as much ground as possible in increasingly limited time, the class is to be divided into three groups for close investigations of the text. The teacher and the PGCE student each take a group and leave the room, I remain in the classroom with the third group. Not expecting this, I find myself unprepared to make this

transition from observer to participant-observer smoothly. I introduce myself; explaining that I am an American teacher researching Shakespeare teaching in England.

[OC:Immediately having said that, I wonder if it might not have been better simply to tell them my name, as the teacher-student relationship is burdened with so many expectations: I may have handicapped my own ability to explore the possibilities for learning outside of the parameters determined by our expectations. Ironically enough, because I am unprepared to "teach" I find myself discovering for the first time things in the script that I hadn't noticed before. Sharing these ideas with the enthusiasm of sudden insight helps to ease the initial awkwardness of the situation. As I have not brought a text today, I share a copy with another girl: it is a hard-backed Arden edition, and in addition to the ominous amount of footnotes that encumbers the bottom of every page, this particular copy is heavily annotated with the neatly penciled comments of a previous owner's A-level revision. I ask her if she finds this helpful, or a distraction in her reading. She claims, to my surprise, to find it helpful.]

Because the scene we are working on is very long, I anticipate that the bulk of the time will necessarily be devoted to actually reading through the text: I am eager to gauge the level of their understanding through the reading, so I put it to them: "Would you like to take parts and read this aloud or are you uncomfortable doing this?" I am rewarded for this with faces wrinkled in various degrees of disgust, shaking heads and averted eyes: clearly not. Our silent reading drastically curtails time for discussion- what ensues is tentative at first: I begin with a question that I hope is fairly straightforward and easy:

RQ: Is everyone clear to begin with about what is happening in this scene or is there confusion about the confusion?

We carry on, and I find, unfortunately, that I am posing the questions:

RQ: What effect does Othello's entrance have upon the activity around him on the stage?... What do you make of Brabantio going unnoticed?... Take a look at Othello's "round, unvarnished tale"; is it really unvarnished?... What effect does this tale have upon the assembled company?... Look at the Duke's response; what does the ellipse at the end of the line indicate perhaps about the nature of the speech's effect?... What does Othello reveal about himself in the tale?... What was the nature of his courtship?

[OC:I am trying by this to share with them a new insight into the character of Othello- in particular, his susceptibility to act upon a hint: the obliquity of the courtship between Othello and Desdemona, the strength of intimacy when oblique communication is based

upon correct assumptions, and the tragic consequences when it is based upon the wrong assumptions: he murders Desdemona on a hint. This, I find at the time to be an exciting discovery; and the students respond well to it. It is not, however, a point of language or rhetoric that I can at the moment divorce from a notion of character. Having been taken by surprise, I am equipped merely with discovery, and not prepared to exercise control; not able to puzzle it out any further than this.]

The teacher returns- her group has looked at the scene in terms of structure- entrances, exits, the build-up of groups of characters on the stage, the diminishment of those same groups; the closing of the scene with only Iago and Roderigo on the stage, building a new kind of tension in contradistinction from that which characterized the very crowded stage at the opening of the scene.:

TS: This was a moment that we identified as important; the war and love are set against each other as major themes.

Our group is called upon to share our insights. We talk about the fact that the scene begins at night; the special nature of the meeting. The teacher affirms:

TA: Here are people having to take decisions in a hurry. They talk about Othello as someone who cannot loose control, someone who fulfils our expectations of a leader.

#### Field Notes Lesson - IV

Teacher: Teacher A

Time: 8:50 - 10:05 am, Monday December 3, 1990

Present: Five female, one male student. Upper-sixth .

Numbers are diminished due to a history field trip. Jim, the PGCE student, pops in briefly to say he cannot stay. One of the students comments:

SS: We'll miss you, Jim. You're our walking Shakespeare encyclopedia.

[OC: Jim is earnest and voluble; clearly touched by this.]

The first ten minutes of class time are taken up with scheduling the students for parent-teacher conferences. While this is happening, another female student arrives late to class. By 9:01 we begin. The teacher begins :

TQ: "It is silliness to live, when to live is a torment;" What kind of person does he sound like?

SR: Hamlet?

Some discussion follows as to how and why this might be the case; the students clearly aren't following along with this.

TQ: Why is he ranting? Why is he upset? Over whom?

[OC: Silence- It's early Monday morning-then finally:]

SR: Desdemona?

TS: "'Tis in ourselves"...it's what the Tory party has been telling us all along what was up to us to do!

They look carefully at 320-335;

Iago: Virtue? a fig! 'tis in ourselves, that we are thus, /or thus: our bodies are gardens, to the which our/wills are gardeners, so that if we will plant nettles,/ or sow lettuce, set hyssop, and weed up thyme;/ supply it with one gender of herbs, or distract it/ with many; either to have it sterile with idleness,/ or manur'd with industry, why, the power, and/ corrigible authority of this, lies in our wills. If the balance of our lives had not one scale of reason, to/ poise another of sensuality, the blood and baseness / of our natures would conduct us to most preposterous/ conclusions. But we have reason to cool our/ raging motions, our carnal strings, our unbitted/ lusts; whereof I take this, that you call love, to be a sect, or scion

She elicits responses as to what it's all about, then they take a careful look at the sexual dynamic, the manipulation and voyeurism in the scene. She does a good job of making the connection between manipulation and voyeurism; though there is very little student input. What little is made is virtually sneered at by the others. Looking again at the closing soliloquy of Act I, by 9:33 they move on to Act II.

TS: We are now in Cyprus- and we shall remain in Cyprus till the end of the play- let's let you do something now- I've talked for ages; more than enough.

She assigns them to divide up into groups, and investigate the first 80 lines for what is important. "You'll need to read it through quickly", she advises. Some very busy reading ensues-silently. It is Monday in an overheated classroom, again. They continue:

TQ: What's going on then, chaps?

SR1: A tempest; a storm.



SR2: That's important- it kind of reflects what's going on inside the characters, doesn't it?

TA: Yes, you can say that.

SR3: I always thought that it was the least important scene in the play.

TC: Right then, defend your position.

SR3: Well, it's a preamble; it's a prologue.

TQ: What kind of a prologue is it? What do we find out about the characters in this?

After some discussion, with varied student participation, the teacher sums up:

TS: Yes, it's a prologue, but there are important things in it. Look: " The great contention of the sea and sky parted our fellowship: but hark, a sail."

SR: Only something as great as the sea and sky can come between them.

We digress into discussion of some of the sexual imagery. The students are quite appalled when, with the help of both of us (for I am called upon to affirm this) they are clued into the realities of the Elizabethan connection between sex and death. We explain the ambiguity behind the words "nothing" and "dying". There is a burst of embarrassed laughter from the girls in the class as the lone boy in the room blurts out: "Don't look at me!"

### Field Notes - Lesson V

Teacher: Teacher A

Time: 2:20 - 3:30 pm, Wednesday 5 December, 1990

Present: six female, one male student; upper sixth

The history trip students returned, the numbers are considerably swelled: the teacher arrives and says straight away:

TS: Rumour has obviously gotten round that I had to take a half hour phone call from the exam moderator about the extended essays; not just this group's essays...

She goes on to explain that the examiner's concerns about all English literature A-level candidates were discussed, and then proceeds to address each student's essays individually; noting verbatim what needed to be added to their extended essay titles:

TS: Lisa- strictly speaking you shouldn't be doing two plays- I said to the moderator, "But you've always allowed this in the past"...add in "What dramatic qualities strike you in these plays- the similarities and differences": Reyka, "The obsessive nature of male domination"; he's happy about the poetry of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, but not the biography; "What kinds of topics interested him, how has he made them interesting to you- Choose two poems and show what is typical." Kate- Any three titles will be fine; add on "How has she opened your eyes to issues which you would not have previously considered?" Rachel: You need to make sure that your title contains the idea of characters in exile; the idea of English characters abroad. Kim: He thought the whole idea was completely impossible given the two you've chosen- How do Emily Dickenson and Sylvia Plath handle themes-you can choose the themes- through close analysis show what appeals to you in the way they write- so you can limit this to only two poems. Jonathan: he was very pleased to see someone writing about Seamus Heaney-"How does he invoke Irish life? Show what you like about him."

SQ: Do we get any more time on these?

TQ: Would it be reasonable to say have the essays ready by the end of the mocks? The mocks are over by January 24th.

SS: I was told by three English teachers that Seamus Heaney would be a bad idea and that's what I wanted to do!

TRD: We'll say Monday January 28th... if you could still manage to have a go at it before Christmas, that would be the sensible thing to do. You might as well know that all your whole folder- eight pieces- seven essays plus the extended essay- is due on the 22nd of March. There has to be an essay on non-fiction, there has to be a poetry essay, and there has to be an extra Shakespeare essay; not on Othello.

SS1: Not on Othello! We haven't done any other Shakespeare!

SS2: Midsummer Night's Dream? We did Midsummer Night's Dream, but we never wrote an essay on it.

TR: You can have more than one Shakespeare essay; but you need at least one that's not on Othello.

SQ: Can we use our Pride and Prejudice essays?

TR: It's better not to: that's an exam text-better not to mix them up.

There is a deal of mithering about the ways in which the teaching of the English A-level has been juggled about-the groups have been split and re-formed, and teachers lost and shuffled. As a consequence, not all the students in the group as it now stands have learned all the same things with the same teachers, and all are concerned about what they might have missed. The teacher continues:

TS: If you've got all your course work essays, you need to start putting them in order-on Monday the 17th we'll have a course work essay lesson- I'll bring lots and lots of topsheets and we'll put them somewhere safe, like the sixth form office that was broken into last night...

SQ: I need to make an appointment with you.

(There is a parents' evening tonight.)

SQ: Where will you be tonight?

TR: I'd like to go home, eventually! But we'll be in room one.

By 2:58 we turn, finally, to Othello.

TS: On Monday, the six of us that were here had a look at the first 80 lines of Act II, i, and this is what we said- Joel was quite scathing about the storm- he said it was a preamble; a prologue; that it wasn't quite important- but we said that there were bits that were important; what did we say?

SR: There's all this stuff about Cassio getting parted from Othello, and it's ambiguous- it's not just about the storm-

TA: He says, "The great contention of the sea and skies/ Parted our fellowship...", and their fellowship is going to be sundered- we could also say that the line puts together the natural elements which are reflected in the psychological elements...What else?

SR: We talked about chaos and uncertainty.

TA: That's standard. Good. Right then-we'll carry on and let Tina and Lisa fill you in later about the sex bits at the end.

SQ: What sex bits? Is there sex in this?

TR: Is there sex in this? It's full of sex!

(General clamour: "Let's do it now!" "Why not?" "AW!") She draws their attention instead to a long gloss on lines 109-166:

TS: Your editor gives you a long footnote on this: because you're all keen A-level students, you should read this. (She reads the footnote to them, aloud, the Arden edition footnote begins, "This is to many readers, and I think rightly, one of the most unsatisfactory passages in Shakespeare. To begin with, it is unnatural" - then continues:) Now, I would take dispute with this. I think we get a lot more out of this; about Iago in particular. One of the favourite exam questions is, "Is Iago really evil?"; not riveting stuff, but passages like this should show you how single-minded Iago is in his designs.

She moves on to lines 135-145, beginning with Iago's "She never yet was foolish, that was fair,/ For even her folly help'd her, to an heir":

TQ: What do you notice about the syntax of this bit?

SR: It rhymes.

TQ: What's the effect of that?

SR1: Makes it go quicker.

SR2: Makes it neater.

TQ: But why? Desdemona gives you a clue- "These are old paradoxes"-they are speaking in proverbs and conventional phrases...the run of these conventional phrases is broken as Desdemona turns to the two honest people, Emilia and Cassio, who will be dragged into this.

She skips ahead:

TS: If you look at line 177 - [Iago:] "Your fingers at your lips? would they were clyster-pipes for your sake.." the gloss on "clyster pipes" is "a syringe for a vaginal douche"- That's nasty!

SR: Where?

TS: Wake up, Jonathan!

She reads through 185-190, ending with Othello's line to Desdemona, " If it were now to die,/'Twere now to be most happy," then asks:

TQ: What do you make of that?

There's a bit of fnarr-fnarring from the students here, including Jonathan, who clearly has woken up: perhaps we shouldn't have told them about "dying"...At 3:28 things wind down to a close:

TS: You're all very tired; very end of term, I can tell. You don't want to do any work- just have Christmas parties. Oh well. be good. But do lots of work!

Class is dismissed, Mock exams are looming, and there are to be no lessons on Othello next Monday or Wednesday.

## Field Notes - Lesson VI

Teacher: Teacher A

Time: 8:50 am, Monday 17 December, 1990

Present: Five girls, two boys- upper sixth.

Today is the day that course work folders are to be sorted. Several of the students have "forgotten" and since apparently only three students have brought their folders, there appears to be very little to do. It is coming very close to the Christmas break, but no one seems terrifically pressed. At 9:11 the teacher, who has stepped out to the sixth form

office, returns with the folder requirements. By March 22nd, students must have read and written about a minimum of six texts different from the exam texts; this must include-

- one non-exam Shakespeare
- the poetry of one or more writers
- or poetry exploring chosen themes
- a work of non-fiction
- one extended essay of about 3,000 words on broader themes.

The teacher goes on to suggest:

TC: It is quite legitimate of you to see a Shakespeare production and review it; tell how far the production satisfactorily illuminates the text, or; if you've seen a play that's been filmed, you can write about that- the comparison between the two.

There is some discussion about what plays they might do-or see- upon suggesting Romeo and Juliet, the student is told:

TR: That's rated as a GCSE text; the sort of thing you do at O-level, really.

She adds that,

TS: It is anticipated that most essays will be between 800 and 2,000 words; bear in mind that there will be a total of eight pieces of work.

They move on to discussion of the mock exam- as far as that goes, they must all be here tomorrow. There will be two papers; paper one will be two and a half hours including fifteen minutes reading time. There will be two sections, part A, which will be a poem, or pair of poems, and part B, which will be prose or drama, with a guiding brief on how to respond. The teacher advises, with regard to paper one:

TS: Plan your work, make notes on the paper and then get down to it. Don't worry about the smoothness and fancy phrases.

SQ: Are they marked in the same way our essays are marked?

TR: No- they're not looking for the same thing. They won't expect them to be polished and considered.

Paper two will be three and a half hours long, with an additional fifteen minutes reading time, and will cover four set texts:

TS: You'll have four questions, on: Othello, Pride and Prejudice, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, and the fourth one (which will be the Wordsworth in the summer) will be some other poem for the mocks. The exam is 50% of your mark, and the folder is 50% at the end of the day.

There is a bit of brief chatter about percentages; what each individual piece of work is worth in the course work folder- particularly the extended essay.

TS: When you think about it numerically, it hardly seems worth it, but you just have to get on with it.

Students discuss the actual seating arrangements- the advantages of sitting near the door in the event that students need to use the loo; the necessity for doctor's notes in the event that medication may be needed. They talk generally about invigilation; from both the teacher's and the students' points of view. The teacher claims to vastly prefer to invigilate A-level exams over GCSE because it is possible with the A-level exams to get on with other work while the students are getting on with the exam. Apparently the GCSE exams are much more closely policed than the A-level. The last ten minutes of class time are spent in chat. On January 28th we will recommence with Othello.

### Field Notes - Lesson VII

Teacher: Teacher A

Time: 2:20 - 3:30 pm, 6 February, 1991

This class has taken a very long break from their study of the play. The first order of business is directed toward the course work folders; the news is broken to this class about the postal moderation and the fact that the examining board has pushed the deadline for submission forward to 11 March. Students are also told about the random verification of teachers' moderations- this is carried out by lottery that the teacher has presented to them in less intimidating terms by suggesting that there is the possibility of improved chances through the query by lottery:

TS: This is the bit you can do something about: it's 50% of the grade.

She reminds them, once again of the requirements for the complete course work folder: eight essays; on at least six texts- one of which must be an extended essay. As so much depends upon the course work folder, students are naturally anxious about this, as is clear from what follows:

SQ: Can we re-write them?

TR: No.

SC: Why not?

TR: Because it's already marked, isn't it?

SC: But what's the difference between writing a new essay and re-writing an old one?

TR: Because it's a burden - on both of us - have I got time to be re-marking essays?

The student persists; finally the teacher relents:

TS: Because I'm a soft touch, I'm sure I won't deny you the chance to re-write. There must be a course work essay on Shakespeare- Hamlet or Midsummer Night's Dream for most of you, but if you liked both, there's nothing to stop you from doing both; you need an essay on poetry; at least three poems- a non-lit essay; non-lit meaning in this case non-fiction; in this case everyone will be writing on an interview with poets on their attitudes about writing poetry.

They are also told that a "creative response" is not unacceptable; that it would be very sensible to have work on a another novel; it would be sensible to have work on another play. Going around the room to check on the status of everyone's folder essays, there is a general feeling that many students want to either re-write or write new essays- anything from two to four new essays each. The teacher responds:

TR: Now there is a tremendous crunch of time; if we're not careful, we're not going to get through Othello and Wordsworth now...and it sounds as if we all need to take a lesson on The Yellow Wallpaper now.

They are reminded that set examination texts cannot be used for essays for the course work folder. It is suggested that they write an extensive review of the current production of A Long Day's Journey into Night at the Bristol Old Vic:

TS: You are entitled to write a review of a play in performance as a course work essay.

More details; more queries, more interviews to schedule interrupt the flow of things. Now the question is what's the best use of the available time- the general consensus seems to be that they'd like to take the classtime to work on the course work folders- four of them will be off to do Hamlet on their own- and there will be an Othello lesson on Monday.

At 3:14, things begin to wind down. It is announced that Jonathan is having a birthday today- he's 18. Class is dismissed.

## Field Notes - Lesson VIII

Teacher: Teacher A

Time: 8:50 - 10:05 am, Monday 11 February, 1991

At last we return to Act III of Othello. A look at the scenic structure is set as an in-class exercise. Clearly, throughout the time that they spend working on this, they are extremely pre-occupied with re-writing essays for the course work folders. Despite the teacher's instructions on Friday last, half the students have not brought their books. While the teacher is out scaring up a copy of Hamlet for another student's course work essay, no real work apparently is being done- all are engaged in conversation about course work and exams. Upon her return, the teacher comments:

TS: So, we're all working on Act III Othello, are we? We're looking at the scenic structure; obviously you're going to say something about plot development; obviously you're going to be talking about character development...

(There is a guilty shuffling of books and papers...)

TC: You're not thinking about Othello at all, are you? You're all thinking about your course work folders, aren't you? I know it's Monday morning and it's hard, but please try.

While two individual students have a look at Hamlet and The Tempest respectively, the teacher takes some time in individual conference with one student who is convinced that she must re-write five of her eight course work essays. Two girls elect to read Act III aloud, softly, to one another. With increasing quiet and concentration, the work apparently gets underway.

At 9:57 they turn finally to Act III. The teacher asks what they found in Act III, and is greeted with a general silence. She asks what they did to revise the play the last time around:

SR: Passnotes

SR2: I hate those.

With only five minutes of class time remaining, Othello is again abandoned for the moment, until next time. The half-term break will begin on Friday, and this group will not meet again until 27 February.



## Field Notes - Lesson IX

Teacher: Teacher A

Time: 2:20 - 3:30 pm, Wednesday 27 February

Teacher arrives and announces a revision seminar: "Spirit of Place: Shakespeare's sense of place in a variety of texts." followed by lunch, and then a Poetry Criticism seminar. Cost: £6.00.

She launches straight into the text, beginning with line 433 of Act III, iii : "Oh, monstrous, monstrous!", racing through, reading aloud, and calling attention to the emotional context, as she offers the students a point of connection:

TS: You all know what it's like to get a first gift from a boyfriend...if you feel the inner psychology, the weight and depth of what's happening to Othello and how Iago is just enjoying this so much!

She reads out clearly and intelligently, calling attention to specific textual detail, again within an emotional context:

TS: Look at how "heaven" has changed: "Now by yond marble heaven"- hard, cold; a really clever image.

Attention is called too to the fact that Iago and Othello are kneeling, calling for the witness of heaven:

TS: The lies that he's spinning are drawing Othello closer to him; see how courteous Othello is with Iago; there's a kind of resignation- Iago's got what he wants: "I am your own forever". It's the very centre of the play.

Moving on now to scene iv:

TS: Immediately we see Iago's lies in a different context- the playing and the punning tell us something else: "for one to say a soldier lies is stabbing"; Iago's a soldier.

She notes the formality of Othello's greeting to Desdemona; the distance this implies. She continues:

TC: You can feel the running of his thoughts...You've got to think about the tone of this for your actress- is she scared, is she anxious, is she wary? Something you need to consider while you're doing your revision.

She blazes through the act, stopping to comment on these individual lines as quoted:

on line 55: " ...that handkerchief/ Did an Egyptian to my mother give,/ She was a charmer, and could almost read/ The thoughts of people;"

TS: You remember all the talk of magic in the Brabantio speech? This reminds you of it.

On the speech to "I' faith is't true?"

TS: There's a spot on regularity to this which adds to the weight of what he's saying here. This regularity is broken in the next 20 lines- all that regularity; the questions and interruptions all help convey her fear- she's scared now; she's never seen him like this.

Of line 100, where Emilia says, immediately prior to the entrance of Iago and Cassio, "Tis not a year or two shows us a man:/ They are all stomachs, and we all but food;/ They eat us hungerly, and when they are full,/ They belch us", she asks,

TQ/S: Is that wifely wisdom? In comes the creator of it all, and the innocent gull: and there's a tension there.

On line 120; Desdemona: Alas, thrice-gentle Cassio,/ My advocacy is not now in tune,"

TS: Her generosity and kindness towards Cassio is part of her own undoing.

On line 135, Iago: Something of moment then: I will go meet him,/ There's matter in't indeed, if he be angry.

TS: Iago is able to cause unquiet; to stir the ripples even further.

To line 155, Emilia: But jealous souls will not be answer'd so;/ They are not ever jealous for the cause,/ But jealous for they are jealous...

TS: Emilia's wisdom here is highly apparent- they don't need a reason to be jealous; they're jealous because they're jealous.

To line 165, Desdemona: I will go seek him, Cassio, walk hereabout,/ If I do find him fit, I'll move your suit,/ And seek to effect it to my uttermost."

TS: She's going back for one more try: you've got to admire her really: Enter Bianca- Bianca's the type of girl Desdemona isn't: Cassio gives her the handkerchief and the plot turns back on itself. Now she's jealous on account of the handkerchief. Those exchanges are far from throw-away because you have clear parallels here: it doesn't take much to make those kind of connections.

She hurries on to Act IV, stopping after the first 34 lines, with Iago's play on "Lie"; "With her, on her, what you will.":

TS: It's the end, isn't it? That he can play him out to this, to make a joke about it.

To line 44, Iago: Work on,/ My medicine, work: thus credulous fools are caught..

TS: There's a complete breakdown of coherence; poor Othello collapses into a fit, and Iago's able to stand over him and say this!

To line 55, Iago to Cassio: Do you withdraw yourself a little while,/ He will recover straight:

TS: [Iago] doesn't want Cassio to speak with Othello so he prevents it from happening.

To line 80, Iago to Othello, of Cassio: Bid him anon return, and here speak with me...but encave yourself,/ And mark the jeers, the gibes, and notable scorns that dwell in every region of his face;/ For I will make him tell the tale anew...

TS: [Othello] is resolved now; no matter what he's told, his mind's made up. Now Othello is suffering indignity- to hide him in a corner to hear about his wife's unfaithfulness- think of how everyone spoke so highly of him in the beginning and now he's reduced to this.

On line 117, where Cassio, speaking of Bianca, is thought by Othello to be speaking of Desdemona: I marry her? what? a customer;/ I prithee bear some charity to my wit,/ Do not think it so unwholesome. Ha, ha, ha!

TS: That's really debasing: to hear your wife talked of as a whore. It's easy to see this as being very heavy-handed, very over the top, but you must go with it; the psychologizing that we do is really taking away from it in a way.

SQ: Othello's really thick, isn't he?

On line 155, Othello: By heaven, that should be my handkerchief!:

TS: Bianca throwing the handkerchief back at Cassio like this plays right into Iago's plan- that's a good place to leave it really because it's almost half past three.

[OC: Throughout this lesson, which has galloped along at a furious pace, the teacher's tone has been extremely enthusiastic, exciting, and compelling. The lesson passed almost entirely without comment from the students (save the one boy who commented on how "thick" Othello must be to be such a dupe- the teacher did in fact take pains to amend this judgement; saying in effect that Othello was not "thick" but vulnerable). For the most part, all the students assiduously scribbled away in their notebooks and in their Arden texts, apparently taking down everything they were told. While this teacher at no point confided any personal reservations about the play, judging by the abundance of enthusiasm so evident in this lesson, it is because there are no reservations to reveal.]

## Field Notes - Lesson X

Teacher: Teacher A

Time: 8:50 - 10:05 am, Monday 4 March, 1991

Only five girls remain to do Othello, three more enter late. The three boys and one other girl who have done Othello before have been excused from this lesson to use the time working on their essays for the course work folder. The teacher continues where she left off in the last lesson with her commentary, beginning with Othello's line 155: "By heaven, that should be my handkerchief!"

TS: This is rock bottom for him. All the value and worth of that handkerchief has been thrown away; debased.

On line 178, Othello: ...my heart is turn'd to stone;/ I strike it and it hurts my hand.

TS: "I strike it and it hurts my hand": it echoes that line about the marbled heavens, doesn't it: shows you how things have changed.

Again, her focus is theatrical as she asks of line 192, Othello:...but yet the pity of it, Iago:/ O Iago, the pity of it, Iago"!

TC: How would you have your actor say this line, or play this scene? They like to throw questions like this at you now and again. You'd do well in your revision to consider these things. Why does Othello have to keep repeating, "Oh, the pity of it, the pity of it!"- What's going on here? Anyone?

SR: He's obsessed, isn't he: he can't let go of it.

TA: Yes- and here's a really clever bit: "Do it not with poison"- He even tells him how.

She skips ahead to line 210, Iago: Something from Venice, sure; 'tis Lodovico,/ Come from the Duke, and see, your wife is with him.

TS: All of a sudden the external world intrudes upon the internal world. Othello's got to be a public person again. What's going on here? Othello says, "Are you sure of that?"; who's he talking to? What's he doing? You've got a tricky bit of stage business there; there's some ambiguity. You see how closely you have to read it. For a moment Othello is the outsider in that scene between Othello and Desdemona; in their concern for him over the matter of Cassio we see that Desdemona is innocent- we know that anyway, but now we know it in a different way.

On line 235, where Othello, striking Desdemona in the sight of Iago, Lodovico, and his attendants, calls her "Devil!":

TS: This is public humiliation of Desdemona; he's being very cruel and vicious to her. You see the repetition being used again to indicate the obsession- he's ranting here.- Cassio shall have my place" is deeply ironic: he thinks that Cassio has already had his place- in bed.

On line 260, where Lodovico asks, "Is this the noble Moor, whom our full senate/ Call all in all sufficient? This the noble nature,/ Whom passion could not shake?":

TS: Look at the way his questions bring us back to the heart of the matter.

On line 272, Iago: Alas, alas,/ It is not honesty in me to speak/ What I have seen and known...

TS: What a bloody liar! This man is amazing!

On line 278, Lodovico, of Othello: I am sorry that I am deceiv'd in him.

TS: Now we've got Lodovico using this word "deception" again.

She begins now on IV, ii, paying special attention to the effect of the setting:

TS: We're back into a close, domestic scene: a sense of claustrophobia and crisis after a very public scene; "Nor ever heard nor ever did suspect"- the pressure of the syntax, the repetition across the pair of them using "ever" and "never" bonds the meaning here; it's very clever. "If any wretch": we know a wretch has put this in her head; we know who the wretch is- it's her husband... You get this feeling of the dark closing in, of the room shrinking as Othello and Desdemona are left alone.

On line 35, Othello to Desdemona: Come, swear it, damn thyself,/ Lest, being like one of heaven, the devils themselves/ Should fear to seize thee, therefore be double-damn'd,/ Swear thou art honest.

TS: The idea of heaven and hell being turned around on itself echoes what you've heard in the earlier scenes... You see her here again being generous, being self-negating if you like, to please him.

[OC: It bears mentioning that at this point, I am literally the only person in the room writing down to the best of my ability what she is saying into a notebook: two of the girls are writing into the text itself- I have a real sense of my behaviour affecting the rest of the class, almost as if the class has abdicated responsibility for taking notes to me.]

She continues with a close and intelligent reading, calling to mind significance of imagery, an organic internal order to this; and it is her enthusiasm that carries it off. She carries on to line 84, where Desdemona replies to Othello's "Are you not a strumpet?" with "No, as I am a Christian:"

TS: She gets mad - well done, Desdemona!-"As I am a Christian"-it reminds you that Othello is not a Christian.

SQ: He'd be a Muslim, wouldn't he?

TR: Yes, probably: so there's that tension there too, it reminds you that Othello is not a Christian; that he's different: he's Black.

On line 94, Othello to Emilia: You, mistress,/ That have the office opposite to Saint Peter/  
And keeps the gates in hell, ay, you, you, you!"

TS: This bit resonates- there's a sense of Judas and the thirty pieces of silver, as he goes to pay Emilia.

[OC: I would add to this that he's using Emilia as a bawd in paying her: "gates of hell" is a vicious sexual pun, which she has either missed or chosen not to point out; very likely the latter.]

She goes on to line 135, wherein Emilia voices her suspicions as to the origins of Othello's jealousy to Desdemona: I will be hang'd, if some eternal villain,/ Some busy and insinuating rogue,/ Some cogging, cozening slave, to get some office,/ Have not devis'd this slander, I'll be hang'd else.

TS: Emilia puts a finger on it, doesn't she? But there's a cover-up job from Iago- has to be, hasn't there? Here's his wife pointing her finger...Out of this domestic wrangling, it comes out what Iago's been harbouring- it was Act I, scene iii- I know because I looked it up for you- that he suspected the Moor of sleeping with Emilia, and she says, "You were a fool to believe it then; you're a fool to believe it now"

On line 155, where Desdemona prays, If e'er my will did trespass 'gainst his love/ Either in discourse of thought or actual deed... a student pipes up:

SS: It's a bit like the Lord's Prayer here.

TA: Yes! Brownie points for Lisa! Yum, scrum! That's good.

[OC: The above recited, I might add, with real affection and appreciation.] She carries on:

TS: Enter Roderigo. There's a change of pace now, there's silly Roderigo- he's kind of stupid with some half funny lines to say that make us giggle a bit; it winds up the tension in a different way because we know that Roderigo will get wound up in this plot too. ( She continues to read through the text, then adds:) You can almost hear the audience murmuring- "here's something new to watch",; another facet to it. "I cannot go to" I cannot you know: be erect; are you with me? All of a sudden, you can see Iago sensing a new way to use Roderigo too, You have a real sense of him playing Roderigo like a fish on a line. But Iago's now had to lie directly to get what he wants- up till now he's been using half-truths; it's gone so far now even Iago can't quite control it.

She begins on IV, iii, pausing at line 19, where Desdemona says of Othello: My love doth so approve him,/ That even his stubbornness, his checks and frowns,-/ Prithee unpin me,- have grace and favour in them.

TS: You feel with her, don't you; she's matured- she's saying even now, even his frowns have grace and favour. The fact that she's studied him in this love is important.

On line 25, where Desdemona tells of her mother's maid: ..call'd Barbary,/ She was in love, and he she lov'd prov'd mad:

TS: Her story balances Othello's story about the handkerchief; there are parallels here.

On line 40, in the middle of the "Willow" song:

TS: The words have echoes here for her, don't they? They are words that you can apply directly to Othello and Desdemona if you like.

On line 62, where to Desdemona's question, Dost thou in conscience think - tell me, Emilia, - / That there be women do abuse their husbands/ In such gross kind? Emilia answers: There be some such, no question.

TS: It's Emilia's' practical sense played against Desdemona's innocence. We ought to stop now. But looks like we'll finish it on Wednesday. Hooray!

### Field Notes - Lesson XI

Teacher: Teacher A

Time: 2:20 - 3:30 pm, Wednesday, 6 March 1991

Present: Three male; six female students to start.

This is to be the last of the explication lessons on the text of Othello before revision lessons later on, before the examinations. Some of the students are merely waiting to be dismissed, as they are not planning to revise this play.

At 2:27 the teacher arrives, distributes a few more extended essays; the three lads leave and she starts right in at IV, iii; line 75, where Emilia puts it to Desdemona: Who would not make/ her husband a cuckold, to make him a monarch? I/ should venture purgatory for it.

TS: You've got interesting differences here about how these two women think about the marriage bond; it raises many questions about how sacred these things really are.

At line 95, in the middle of Emilia's speech about infidelity which begins, But I do think it is their husbands' faults/ If wives do fall:, a student asks:

SQ: Would this be very shocking for an audience back then?

TR: I don't really think so; it would be nice to think it was- when you read Act V you have to put this speech into the context of what happens then. I'll ask those who would know better than I, and get back to you.

They begin Act V. The teacher takes care to draw out carefully the frantic stage business, the darkness, deception and atmosphere; the masking and diversions from the truth. At line 62, where Roderigo cries out immediately after having been stabbed by Iago, "O damn'd Iago, O inhuman dog,...oh, oh, oh":

TS: It's a reminder of just what we're dealing with here- "inhuman dog"- this is what Iago's devilment has created; this kind of subterfuge and mayhem.

At line 120, where Bianca protests to Emilia, "I am no strumpet, but of life as honest/ As you that thus abuse me", she asks:

TQ: Do you detect any kind of parallel honour, some kind of parallel reason that would explain Emilia's bristling there? I don't know: I only ask..

(No response)

She moves on to V, ii:

TS: In the opening 20 lines the imagery helps set the atmosphere (she draws attention here to the stage directions as well). He [Othello] believes that he is right to do this; that this is justice-and of course the awful thing is that he will come to discover that he has committed murder.

On line 40, where Desdemona replies to Othello's "think on thy sins" "They are loves I bear to you":

TS: You know oxymorons, don't you?

(no response)

TS: It's a heightened, exaggerated type of paradox- this idea of sins and love is a type of oxymoron.

When it is revealed To Desdemona that Cassio is killed, she notes;

TS: There's an awful kind of human void at that point, in that gap between "He will not say so" and, "No, his mouth is stopped."

Something comes to her; a parallel between the way in which Desdemona uses the word "husband" and Othello's "Wife, oh wife":



TS: There's some grade A capital in that if you choose to use it.

At 128, when Othello, confronted with Desdemona's murder, says to Emilia "You heard her say, herself, it was not I", she asks:

- TQ: What's going on here? Why won't he admit it?

But there is no response from the students.

At 178, where Iago says of Othello "I told him what I thought, and told no more/ Than what he found himself was apt and true", she points out:

TS: He's right-that's exactly what he's done.

At 195, where Iago commands Emilia, "I charge you get you home", a student remarks that this speech reminds her of Desdemona's obedience to Othello over her father. The teacher's explication continues. On line 285, where Othello identifies himself, "That's he that was Othello; here I am."

TS: He casts away himself- that's brilliant- he's thrown himself away.

Then on line 304, where Iago says: Demand me nothing, what you know, you know,/ From this time forth I never will speak word.

TS: I love this bit- and that's it; that's the last we hear from him.

At line 345, in the middle of Othello's penultimate speech, where he says "then must you speak/ Of one that lov'd not wisely, but too well", the teacher comments:

TS: This speech is one that really builds in resonance; you've got all this kind of quirky courtesy that you saw in the beginning.

We come to line 360, Othello's final speech: I kiss'd thee ere I kill'd thee, no way but this,/ Killing myself, to die upon a kiss."

TS: There's a name for this kind of construction, but I can't think what it is.

SQ: Necrophilia? (General laughter)

TR: NO! Not necrophilia!

They finish the play. She suggests they take another hour, nearer the revision.

TS: So, that's a success

Class is dismissed.

## Springfield Grammar School

## Field Notes - Lesson I A

Teacher: Teacher B

Time: 11:40 -12:55 am, Tuesday November 27,1990

Present: Three male, four female students; all white. Upper sixth formers.

This group is also working with the AEB660 Syllabus; they use the Penguin edition of *Othello*. This class meets, unlike the other A-level *Othello* group, in a ground-floor classroom which is not separate from the main school building. The classroom is very large; it could comfortably accommodate 40 students. High-ceilinged, sunny, and painted white, it is fluorescent lit, with large windows lined with pots of jade trees, wandering jew and an enormous family of mother-of-thousands gone into apparent fertility overdrive. There is a large chalkboard at the front of the room, a teacher's desk, and a grey metal supply cupboard. Written on the chalkboard is a genealogy of Beowulf and an assignment on Children of the Dust. Some illustrated essays are displayed on the back and front bulletin boards, while a larger bulletin board on the side wall is sparsely filled with various official notices. Four free-standing room dividers have been pushed to the periphery of the room, and fifteen small tables are scattered throughout the room, four of which have been grouped together directly in front of the teacher's desk, and around which this group of students sits. While the configuration of furnishings in the room does not at present lend itself to the active method, clearly in a room of this size, the potential exists. I conduct my observations from a separate table slightly behind the main teaching area.

As the lesson begins, a student is given the task of giving out parts to read from Act II, scene i- this she does with obvious relish. I am introduced as a researcher. Another student has a look into my Arden edition of the play, and exclaims over the number of footnotes. When I ask why they have chosen to use the Penguin edition, I am told that this group's first introduction to Othello had been via the Leon Garfield version, and the Penguin edition was felt to be more accessible when approaching Othello via this route. Budget concerns have had something to do with this decision as well.

The students take their parts and read through-stumbling here and there, but plodding on. The teacher throughout watches them, and not the text. This portion of the play is peppered with many lascivious slurs upon the character of women; most coming from Iago. The students, to various degrees appreciate this with the odd snigger.

The reading ceases at the end of II,i. They are told to pull out pencil and paper, and the teacher assigns them the following task:

TS: There are a lot of people saying things about other people here; go carefully through the text and collect those things pay attention to the different qualities of language; have a look not only at what is said but how it is said.

SS: Iago is really the best of all of them.

TA: He has the best part in the play, really.

They are told to notice the vocabulary of particular characters; to try and determine what is characteristic language. They divide into groups of two and scatter around the room, with the teacher partnering the one odd student. Work carries on until 12:55 at which time the lunch bell rings and students pack up their things.

#### Field Notes- Lesson II A

Teacher: Teacher B

Time: 11:40 - 12:55 am, November 28,1990.

Present: six females, three males, all white, upper sixth.

This being a very cold, damp day, several students as well as the teacher arrive with hot drinks in hand. There are two new arrivals to the class. The teacher allows them an extra fifteen minutes to complete their investigations into language and character in Othello, but before the work can begin, they must schedule eight appointments for parent teacher conferences. Work does not begin in earnest until 11:53. Midway through this work, the teacher notes:

TS: One thing you may like to consider is the number of orders Iago gives in this scene; pay attention to the structure of the sentences.

At 12:16 they begin their discussion.

TS: Let's collect together first of all the comments What do people say, for instance, about Othello? If you'd like to write them down as people tell you about them, we'll go round the table and we'll start with Claire.

SR1: "Oh, you are well-tuned now." that's Iago at line 194.

SR2: "Warlike Moor"; line 7.

SR3: "Constant, loving, noble nature."

- SR4: "Our great captain's captain.": (Here the teacher stops to point out that while Othello is the great captain, it is Desdemona who is the great captain's captain. The student is embarrassed by this error and makes no attempt to bluff her way out of it.)

SR5: "Brave Othello": "Lusty moor."

They continue in this way around the table; there are several moments of apparent confusion as students attribute comments about Cassio and again about Desdemona as comments about Othello. (Many of them are clearly losing their bearings. The teacher offers this advice:)

TS: Whenever you do things like this, it's a good idea to write down act, scene and line numbers.

Not all the students had been doing this, and they take a moment now to amend their notes. While these quotes are being shared, one student is assigned to begin collecting quotes about Desdemona:

SR: "Paragons description and wild fame."; "Full of most blessed condition."; "Our great captain's captain"; "The divine Desdemona"; "Excels the quirks of blazoning pens."

As they pick up momentum and carry on around the room with this, there again is confusion as students attribute much of Iago's misogynistic generalizing to Desdemona directly. The teacher then contributes her quote about Desdemona by Iago to the discussion:

TS: "Her eye must be fed, and what delight shall she have to look on the devil?" - Iago seems to be implying that once Desdemona's lust is satisfied, she'll want to move on to some more appropriate partner; He [Iago] doesn't look at her as a person who has made a life-long commitment to Othello, but as a "woman" in a rather bestial way. Whenever you want to come to grips with what a character is like in a play, you've got to take account of what other people say about them.

They move on to Iago; what is being said about him?

SR: "Bold."

SR2: "You may relish him more in the soldier than in the scholar"

[OC: It seems clear at this point that perhaps because of the difficulty of the task, and the breadth of it, students' efforts are somewhat half-hearted, and last minute; the students are

visibly discouraged. They appear to have got it wrong often enough to have lost confidence.]

They carry on, nonetheless, with Cassio:

- SR: "Rash and very sudden in choler" "A great fly Cassio. A slipper and a subtle knave. A knave very voluble. Handsome and young."

The lists are put into the middle of the table.

TS: You need to go into these in a lot more detail for homework. What sort of language is Iago using?

SR: Carefully thought out language.

TS: Orders, primarily. Particularly when he is talking to Roderigo. It is very manipulative writing you can say, and if it is manipulative, why is it manipulative; how is it manipulative? in terms of the syntax- look at the sentence structure.

They look at the script from line 213 to discuss the character of Roderigo and Iago's hold on him. This is very much teacher-directed as she carefully explains, line by line, what the language is doing. They are instructed to go away and for homework look carefully at Iago's language and find:

TS: Short sentences- when they're used, and what they're for. (She is hoping by this, I suspect, to have them discover for themselves the frequency and power of Iago's use of orders.) Images of food and appetite; alliteration, the way in which a speech builds to a conclusion, the use of expletives, the use of proverbs, the number of sexual references, the adjectives- and then go back and look at what Othello's language does.

[OC: At the end of this lesson, the teacher as well as the students seem quite discouraged. This has been particularly frustrating for me, as an observer, because what the teacher had hoped to communicate is as clear to me as the obstacles the students have encountered in the attempt. In the clear light of hindsight, it strikes me that had she assigned each student a single character's language to investigate, and had each different character's comments about other characters written up on different coloured paper, or in a different coloured ink, then the complex comparisons might have been made clearer, had she chosen to continue with a pen and paper investigation.

(There are any number of ways in which to arrive at these insights into character through active method, which would have taken up far less class time, though the amount of preparation time for the teacher would have been considerably increased. The depth of familiarity with the text necessary for preparing a good active lesson would begin with

the teacher; she would, for example, collect and attribute (correctly) the same quotes she had asked the class to find for themselves and use these as the starting point for an active lesson. Quotes about Desdemona, for example, unattributed to their speakers, are written up on A3 card and posted around the classroom. Students are then told to choose one and walk about the room, "greeting" other students with the quote- first conspiratorially, then joyfully, reverentially and so on through a whole gamut of emotions. Extremely fruitful discussions about the relationships between one character and another, and the emotional context through which we form our perceptions of one another will almost certainly follow. This, however, was not anything that I myself was familiar enough with until the NATE Conference of 91, when in workshops on Othello with John Salway, precisely this technique was used. In transcribing these field notes now, over three years after the fact, the enormous potential for these methods in this particular lesson is even more frustrating to relate.]

### Field Notes - Lesson III A

Teacher: Teacher B

Time: 11:40 - 12:55 am, December 4, 1990

Present: As in previous lesson

The teacher begins the lesson by telling the students that the AEB 660 moderator has rung to say that "some people's extended essays" focus must be made a bit more sharp. They are told that he has done this before; the reason he is doing this is because he is being scrutinized by someone else in the organization. "I can't see that this will affect the content of your essays much- what it will mean is tightening up the titles somewhat...I expect he's done this with every school. (Despite her attempts to reassure them that there is nothing out of the ordinary in this call from the AEB660 moderator, the students are quite obviously disconcerted by the news.) Another student then attempts to re-schedule her parent teacher conference, while another boy talks throughout the whole of this. At

11:51 Another girl enters the classroom late; the teacher then repeats the message about the call from the examinations moderator and the extended essays.

Today, we are looking at mock examination questions. At 11:53 the teacher passes out sample Paper One. The teacher speaks, almost entirely without interruption, throughout:

TS: It says on the examination paper that you are to answer one question for each of sections A, B. and C: section C doesn't exist any more because they've decided to assess this section in another way...here they say "You may assess the poem in any way you wish, but you may wish to consider the following"...Now, coming from a GCSE background you won't have had much examination practice- unless you're a very strong candidate, I suggest you follow their advice.

(At this point silence is complete; attention tense.) They look at section B: again, the wording is pointedly clear:

TS: "You may find it helpful to consider the following:" You see; there it is again. You don't have to answer section A before section B; you may be happier launching into prose.

She then suggests a calculation for budgeting their time:

TS: You must divide the total time by the number of questions and then I would go so far as to divide that time between the different parts of the answer.

SS: I would need a calculator by me; I'm absolutely crap at maths-I would spend the first two hours figuring out how much time I had.

TA: Well, I sympathise entirely but it's fairly straightforward...

They look at the prose passage:

TS: I suggest you do what I've always encouraged you to do- make all your notes in rough- the actual text you'll be given I don't think you'll have any problem with.

There is some confusion as to whether or not they are allotted two hours in total for the examination, or two hours and fifteen minutes reading time. (The teacher assures them that she will find out for them.) At 12:06 they carry on for a look at Paper 2:

TS: When you're doing practical criticism you need more time; this is a three hour paper but there are four questions, so allow fifteen minutes for planning, that will leave you about forty-five minutes for each question...now the word is that you don't really need to do a terrific amount of writing.

There is some discussion as to whether or not to include course work essays from their folders. Apparently the grades are balanced and there is a slight element of gamble.

Again, they discuss the control that planning an essay bestows. The teacher now asks them to assess the types of questions being asked:

TS: You must look at questions in this light: which is the most straightforward question, which am I most likely to do best on, and what do I have to do to answer it? ... You can see, can't you that memorising essays done before simply won't help you with this kind of question- what you do need is to be able to find your way around a text.

They look at another question:

TS: "How does this passage show evidence of Wordsworth's enthusiasm for his life as a boy.?" "How"- so you need to know something of Wordsworth's style. Now this next question about how remote Wordsworth might be to the modern reader-it's almost an invitation to waffle, so you've got to be very careful.

(A student interrupts to ask what the point distribution is on the examination; the teacher promises to find out then continues.)

TS: The Comedians for some reason produces some of the best exam essays. Now with the novels you need to know the beginning and ending chapters very well. Examiners tend to think in terms of beginnings and endings. It will help you I think to have your key quotes memorised- you will find it increases your sense of competence as well. If, as you're reading, you come across a quote that is particularly apt, commit it to memory.

They look at another Paper 2:

TS: Look at the Hamlet question for a moment: "Is Hamlet really mad?"...always be aware that you will have to discuss the language as well as what is being said.

(One student notices that the same question on the mock exam turned up on the actual exam in the same year, commenting. "That's rather lucky, isn't it?"

TA: Yes; it is fairly easy to gauge what types of questions you'll be asked. Let's look at another question: " How successfully does Lawrence explore the relationship..." That's rather difficult-what would be the standard by which you judge a question of success?

At this point, the large chattering blonde boy; whose attention has been elsewhere throughout, talks over the forthcoming answer.

TC: It would be nice if Martin had listened to what Tim said because it was rather good, and now he's got to say it again.

Another student pipes up, and Tim is off the hook:

SRD: Shouldn't you just write down your thoughts as they come to you before you answer, time being a factor?

TR: you could do that, but you're liable to spend more time writing down your wonderful reflections than answering the question. The first part of the question is there for the weaker candidates to have something to do; the second part is there as a discriminator.

At this point the teacher stops to ask Nick, who is ill:

TQ: Nick, are you feeling terrible?



Nick says nothing but looks as terrible as he must feel- there is general sympathy all around. It is nearly time to go. They take a look at another paper one; one student exclaims:

SS: This is actually my paper! It's covered with my writing!

This indicates a false start so far as the teacher is concerned, and she collects the papers back again:

TRD: Here's a different paper two, then; you'll not have seen this- oh no, hang on; we've run out of papers...

There is some shuffling about as the papers are sorted and returned; the large blonde boy and his coterie chatter throughout. The teacher announces that two timed questions will be given next week; two on Othello:

TS: And I'll give you two unseen tomorrow- Do you want a poetry unseen and a prose unseen? Alright- we'll do that- or I could give you a choice.

[OC: Time is out and class is dismissed. Throughout this lesson, the atmosphere has been tense and serious, with students clearly worried about the mechanics of the examination- that is, allotment and budgeting of time, planning their answers, and understanding directions. In addition, they seem genuinely worried about their ability to cope with the examination questions themselves- discerning what exactly they are being asked to do, and then setting about in a logical fashion and in an organized way to do it. While the teacher has given a number of helpful suggestions throughout the lesson- read all the questions thoroughly before choosing which to begin with in order to give yourself the best chance of success, be alert to clues within the questions themselves; "you may wish to consider", etc., budget your time sensibly, prepare first and last chapters of novels especially thoroughly, and come to the examination with essential quotes committed to memory- it seems that her comments with regard to this group's lack of experience with examinations, the mention of certain questions being set "to give the weaker candidates something to do" and others being set as "discriminators" have been what most of the group has really taken to heart. The effect that these comments has had seems to have been to make the examination an even more intimidating experience than they had previously imagined, with students second-guessing their own abilities-the message that they seem to have received is that as weaker candidates, they had better take any advice

that the examiners can offer in the questions themselves. They will likewise now attempt to second-guess the examination itself- which are the questions set to give the weaker candidates something to do; and which are the discriminators? If they cannot even tell this much, how can they hope to succeed? In the course of the entire lesson, only one student had anything positive to say- and that was drowned out by the constant chattering of another student. That chattering could be construed either as subversion born out of sheer intimidation of the whole prospect of the upcoming examinations, or as plain rudeness born of a confident belief that the examination poses no threat whatsoever and therefore it was not worth this student's while to attend to the lesson, nor to enable anyone else to attend.]

#### Field Notes- Lesson IV A

Teacher: Teacher B

Time: 11:40 - 12:55 am, December 18, 1990

Present: Three girls, one boy

The Christmas holidays draw apace- the teacher returns to find that in her absence last week, things have not gone according to plan- work that had been set, whether through a failure in communication, holiday lassitude or general apathy, has not been done. In the interests of damage limitation, they are assigned to do now what they should have done before; i.e. brushing up on their exam technique. At 11:53 another boy arrives with apologies for his lateness; he is given a mock exam paper and sets down to work. While the students are writing out their exam answers, the teacher writes the following on the board:

Othello- "Women caught up in a man's world of politics, intrigue, and violence":  
How far do you feel this is an important theme in Othello?

She then erases part of the question, and re-writes it to read: How important a theme do you consider this to be in Othello? This question is set for homework; after the teacher explains that the difficulty in setting a question lies in avoiding what the examiners might be expected to ask. The remainder of the period is spent with the students quietly writing a timed essay.

## Field Notes- Lesson V A

Teacher: Teacher B

Time: 11:40 - 12:55 am, Tuesday, 5 February 1991

At long last, after the Christmas break, mocks, extended essay work, etc., we return to Othello - Act III. But first, there is more news from the examining board: this is the first year that there will be external moderation for the AEB660 A-level course work folders, and as the moderation is postal, March 11 has now been assigned as the hard and fast deadline- earlier than had been expected. Students have been advised not to re-write essays, but rather to concentrate on the examination texts.

The group is doing pair work on Act III of Othello; they've each been assigned a scene to go through and simply list the events- tell what happens, and they've been given approximately ten minutes to do it. One boy has an Othello comic; a bit of an obvious short-cut. Despite the teacher's suggestion that they work at separate tables, they all remain grouped around the central one. In the midst of their discussions, one student asks:

SQ: What does it mean when someone says something but they mean something else- like they say, "Don't be jealous." but they mean "Be jealous."? What's the word for that?

TR: Well, he's making suggestions; he's putting ideas into Othello's head- I don't know that there's a single word for it.

At 12:16, Claire and Nicola are asked to begin with their list of events:

SR: Cassio asks Iago for help; Cassio asks Emilia for a chance to see Desdemona; Othello's suspicion increases as Iago's leading questions are asked.

TQ: What do you say about Othello's jealousy in this scene?

SR1: He's already convinced.

SR2: But he wants proof.

SR1: But he's convinced generally that women can't be trusted- he doesn't relate to Desdemona on her own.

TA: "We call these delicate creatures ours"- in what sense can anyone belong to anyone else? You cannot own their thoughts- Othello's used to this kind of power. What is singularly lacking?

SR: Communication.

SR2: They haven't got any common ground- it's all very sexual, isn't it?

TR: I don't know that's true- it seems to me that trust is singularly lacking.

The discussion begins to focus now on the handkerchief. One student suggests:

SS: She is stupid not to realize that it is going to upset him.

TRD: We might think this if we were Desdemona; but it's quite dramatically effective to see...Shakespeare has to permit various of these events to permit if you like Othello's descent into madness.

They continue with their lists:

SS: Emilia gives Desdemona's handkerchief to Iago; Iago gives the handkerchief to Cassio.

TQ: Now can you tell me in three sentences: What is the importance of this Act to the rest of the play? If you removed this Act from the play, what would happen to it?

They continue to work on this. So far, three of the four pairs have contributed. The comic book couple as of yet have contributed very little to the discussion; it is clear enough that they will be called upon in this go-round. The teacher then directs them to:

TS: Note down the stages by which Iago works on Othello- each time he manages to turn the screw a little bit more.

The next pair are asked for their list of events:

SR: The illumination of Iago's deceit; Lays the foundation for Othello's jealousy.

TA: Look very closely at Othello's language- make some notes on Othello's word order, vocabulary, then go right back to the beginning of the play and compare the speeches there with the speeches in Act III. ...Let's see what Ewan's got.

(The comic book couple is called to account.)

SR: There's a lot of action.

TQ: To what purpose?

[OC: The responses that follow in this go-round are rather feeble, but the teacher does not embarrass them with further pressing.]

She talks a bit about how the relationships become clearer; Ewan at this point redeems himself with an observation about how Othello has changed from the beginning of the play. They are finally asked, for homework, to think about Desdemona, Iago, Othello and Cassio, and be prepared to talk about Act III from each of the character's point of view.

## Field Notes - Lesson VI A

Teacher: Teacher B

Time: 11:40 - 12:55 am, 6 February 1991

Continuation of previous lesson; diminished attendance today due to the fact that several students are on university interviews.

Back to Act III. Claire begins, choosing to talk about the events of Act III from Desdemona's point of view. She talks about how she feels in character:

SR1: Upset; perplexed.

TQ: Did anything cross your mind when Cassio disappeared as Othello entered?

SR1: I understood he was upset about confronting him.

SQ2: Both boys want to know why Desdemona is so persistent about taking Cassio's part- the implication is that it is none of her business.

TR: Don't you think that you're considering this only on the personal level rather than the political level- Montano is after all a very important person.

SR1: I don't understand the politics of it; I know that Cassio is my very good friend, and I have a duty to him as my friend.

The teacher here stops to make several points: that Cassio is a womanizer, and that Desdemona fails to understand Othello's understandable jealousy.

TC: Would it be better to cast Cassio adrift for political reasons? It's a theatrical question: what advice would you give to an actress playing Desdemona ? We tend to think of her as pure, but there's the problem of her persistence on Cassio's behalf. How flirtatious would you have her play it?

She leaves them with this to ponder, then directs the discussion toward the handkerchief:

TQ: Did you feel perhaps that returning to the issue of Cassio while Othello wants to know about the handkerchief was not a wise thing to do?

SQ: Why didn't you just tell him that you lost it?

SR: He's just told the whole story of it; it's too important.

We move on to Martin, who has picked Cassio:

SR: I've been persuaded by Iago to seek Desdemona's help.

TQ: But you've gone about it in a very round about way; why do you go to the clown?

SQ: Why don't you at least go through Emilia?

TQ: What do you infer about doing things that way? It might be misconstrued; mightn't it? He's a quick thinker; he thinks on his feet- he wants to act covertly- you can imagine why Iago doesn't like him...what you hear from Emilia gives you why he's keeping distance.

SR: "He you hurt was a great man in Cyprus"- I think it will only take some time; I was ashamed to face Othello.

TRD: But he says, " My general will forget my love and service."

SR: But everything is happening so fast in the war; I need to get back in his favour as soon as I can.

They conclude that while time will heal the rift, there isn't time available. Another boy asks Martin with regard to the handkerchief:

SQ: Why do you have the work copied; why don't you just take it?

SR1: Because the prostitute will think that it's from some other woman.

The teacher draws their attention to the language that Cassio uses with the Prostitute:

SR: You wouldn't think it was the same bloke- it's nothing like he is with Desdemona.

TA: He divides them into saints and sinners, doesn't he?

SR1: I'm horrible, really.

We move on to Tim, who has chosen Othello:

SR: I think there's a certain change in my attitude to Desdemona; I don't trust her- Iago took me away, and while I was away, Cassio was with her. I've made up my mind that the relationship isn't innocent, but he won't give me any proof. He's suggesting very strongly, and I think he's justified.

The teacher draws attention to Iago's language; Tim responds:

SR: The trouble with Iago is that he's very cryptic- he confuses me. I think he's honestly trying not to get involved on a personal level, but I challenge him to tell me.

TQ: What is Iago's strategy?

SR: He won't tell anything.

TS: The whole temperature is raised a few degrees when Iago says, "Beware, my lord, of jealousy."

SR: I was bit surprised when he mentioned this handkerchief bit.

TQ: What about when Iago reminds you that she deceived her father?

SR: I realize that she's free-willed in what could be a dangerous way.

At 25 past, they carry on to other things and abandon Othello for the moment. The teacher closes by saying:

TS: I hope that shows you how closely you've got to question the text- you've got to feel familiar with this play.

### Field Notes - Lesson VII A

Teacher: Teacher B

Time: 11:40 - 12:55 am, 26 February, 1991

Upon arrival, I find the teacher portioning out the play in segments of eighteen pages each to the six students present. She gives them the following instructions:

TS: Skim through; locate, and list neatly, very neatly- any image that you can; listing as well the act and scene numbers, leaving some space beneath for the next stage in the sorting.

One girl, announcing that she has come without a text, asks instead to have the teacher look at an essay for her course work folder. She is given the teacher's text and told to get on with it. Another girl announces the same; she is given my text- the Arden- which must first be coordinated with the Signet editions that the rest of the class is using, since the teacher has chosen to divide the play according to page numbers rather than act and scene numbers.

SQ: What's an image? I'm not really sure of what an image is...

TR: Don't worry too much about precision- if you're not sure, include it: it can always be eliminated later.

They are given till half past to complete the task and are told "Speed is of the essence."- It is clear that she is not looking for worried, carefully pondered judgements: a quick skim and a hurried collection- she has put out scissors and Pritt Stick and rulers on a nearby table in preparation for the division of the lists, their sorting and re-assembling.

At 12:30 the lists are completed and the teacher takes them away and cuts them up into strips. The strips are to be sorted and put into envelopes; one is to be given to each student to paste up for homework. When they return on Wednesday, the lists will be photo-copied and discussed.

By the close of the session, all but two girls, who are still cautiously and carefully engaged in the collecting of images, are up and about placing strips of paper into envelopes variously labelled "MUSIC", "MONEY" "ANIMAL", "MONSTERS" etc. There is a relaxed but productive atmosphere. The first breath of spring can be felt, and the sunshine has had a welcome effect. There are fourteen envelopes in all, which are labelled :

- 1.Money, 2.Heaven and Hell, 3.Medicine, 4.Water, 5.Light/Dark, 6.Animal,
- 7.Celestial, 8.Horticultural, 9.Body, 10.War, 11.Nautical, 12.Magic, 13.Food,
- 14.Music.

Class is dismissed, and the lesson is scheduled to continue tomorrow.

#### Field Notes - Lesson VIII A

Teacher: Teacher B

Time: 11:40 - 12:55 am, Wednesday 27 February 1991

(Today the numbers are increased: four girls and four boys present as opposed to a total of six yesterday.)

The teacher distributes the envelopes and the as yet un-sorted quotes; asking for those sorted to be put into chronological order; those yet un-sorted to be sorted, she proposes yet another category: "enslavement" imagery to accommodate a growing pile of otherwise unclassifiable images. She comments:

TS: This is rather like a child's game, isn't it?

SR: I don't think we mind, really.

(Funnily enough, in this atmosphere, the peripheral conversations centre on "Bert and Ernie" of Muppets' fame.)

At 11:53, once the images are all sorted, the envelopes are distributed and the students are told to put the strips of paper in each envelope into chronological order and then paste them onto a sheet of A4.:

SQ: What does " Five, two, ninety" mean?



TR: Act five, scene two, line ninety.

Some students have written down page numbers as well; eventually, one clever girl gets round the problem of double checking the order against the copy of the play by asking another girl whose handwriting she recognizes if she was responsible for Act I; this is noted by the others and the handwriting analysis continues. I am curious to see what the result of this exercise will be. Though superficially the lesson is relaxed and appears to be undisciplined, the teacher has a keen ear for superfluous gossip and keeps it in check. The conversation veers accordingly away from Bill Tidy and back to the task at hand. At the very least, to handle and read and "play" with the text like this is an exercise which reinforces familiarity with and power over the words; far more useful, in the long run, than being told what the collection of images will be.

TS: You will probably find that some of these images will fall into more than one category- in which case you'll want to duplicate the image on to another chart to get as complete a list as you can. .

At one point, the teacher comments that someone has placed a quote about the elements ( as in earth, wind, water, and fire) into the "medicine" envelope, clearly confusing them with the chemical elements.

Also, for some inexplicable reason, the "Put out the light" quote has gone astray- when it turns up in the "horticultural" envelope, this causes a laugh.

When the pasting and sorting has been completed, the students are advised to look at each other's collections of images, note the chronology, the frequency, the progression of these and to come up with some "intelligent and perceptive comments" about them.

The room grows rather quiet as they set to this task, and the pounding of feet on the gymnasium floor above us becomes irritatingly loud. The students are clearly distracted by this, and their discussion of it is cut short by the teacher. Those who choose to be inordinately distracted are always the same ones; the reason I know who Martin is, is that I hear his name so often in reprimand.

[OC: It is worth noting at his point that this room, which was decidedly untidy and cluttered, more closet than classroom when I first came to observe, has now improved considerably. The walls are lined with bookcases on which the various collections of books have been sorted and ordered; a row of dictionaries and other reference books are

within easy reach, and the long table has been re-positioned into the centre of the room to make best use of the lighting.]

(For some reason; I can only surmise the subliminal influence of the task at hand, the peripheral conversations centres now around the penalties for rape- various suggestions are offered as alternative penalties: the cutting off of the hands, the castration and branding (on the forehead) of the rapist. The teacher is clearly unimpressed by this:)

TS: Anyone would think that you didn't have the most important examination of your life to prepare for !

These conversations abate somewhat after the reprimand. At 12:48 the teacher asks:

TQ: Should we imagine that some of these characters are much more important than others?

This is more or less a rhetorical question: it is clear that the real discussion of this will have to continue at some later date. The next time they meet (when the teacher will have distributed photo-copies of everyone's lists) they'll be prepared to look at the imagery of the entire play. One boy, who looked to hand his comments in at the end of this session, is given his work back and told to reconsider it.

\*\*\*\*\*

[OC: After class, in conversation with the teacher, I hear her confess that she "does not really like this play". She tells me that she'd seen Olivier play it on stage when she was very young, and she'd liked the "movement" of that, but had subsequently been disappointed in most productions that she'd seen. She said likewise that there were very few productions that she'd seen and enjoyed- that she'd very much enjoyed reading the plays, but hadn't enjoyed seeing them. I came away from this conversation slightly bemused, but nonetheless admiring of her candour and the skill with which this teacher managed to teach Othello enthusiastically and appreciatively while keeping her personal reservations about the play in check. The conversation was enlightening to the effect that it at least partially explained this teacher's obvious preference for discussing Othello as a text, as opposed to a piece of theatre- in almost direct opposition to the preferences of the other teacher. The very different experiences of Othello that these two groups of A-level English students are having should serve as a caution against generalization about "Shakespeare teaching"; even within the same school, among students from the same area

from similar economic and educational backgrounds, the phenomenon of Shakespeare teaching is as idiosyncratic as the chemistry between each individual teacher and every single one of their students.]

### Field Notes - Lesson IX A

Teacher: Teacher B

Time: 11:40 - 10:05 am, Tuesday 5 March, 1991

Present: Four males, 3 females; upper sixth.

The teacher begins by distributing copies of their collections of images, with a plan to discuss these, then to consider another essay (written by another student not in this class) and perhaps to have a look at Act IV. ( The din of many basketballs pounding on the floor above makes it very difficult to hear.)

(The teacher leaves the room for five minutes to allow the students to get on with it- the immediately ensuing conversation centres on students in this class who have abandoned the A-level: not having essays in on time has been the undoing of two of them. There is a distribution of chewing gum, with a bit of risque joking about its "soft and juicy on the inside" quality.)

The teacher returns and asks Alison to start them off- Martin, once again, hasn't got any paper. They begin with images of heaven and hell.

TQ: They're a collection of images related to feelings: how ? For which characters?

SR1: Othello uses heaven to express his love for Desdemona: there's hell suggested when he call her a devil because he thinks she's cheated on him.

SR2: With the magic there's a lot of pagan superstition- they think that the only way Desdemona could love Othello is with magic.

TA: It also has to do with how pure Desdemona is in everyone else's eyes- they can't imagine her union with anyone else "not of her kind" without it. Can you see any linkage between groups of images?

SR: Well, heaven and music.

TQ: How?

SR: It's to do with love.

TA: It's to do with harmony, isn't it? What about celestial images?

(No response)

TS: So no one's actually gone through and checked out the placement of celestial images in this play? It's no good me telling you what to think about this play- it's about time you started doing some work for yourselves- the examination is coming up very soon, and me feeding these things to you is not what it's all about. I suggest we spend the rest of this lesson preparing, as I intended you should have done for homework, a review of these images- I suggest too that you attempt to sort the images- ask yourself what are the dominant images in the play, what characters are particularly associated with certain types of images- if you didn't have these images, what dimension of the play would be lost?

[OC: This last delivered very calmly but firmly: it has been some time in coming and is precisely what this group ( or I should say certain members of it) needs. It is never wise for students to enter an examination situation cocksure and under-prepared. Their overriding concern has been primarily with completion of-even perfection of the essays for their course work folders. This is the one part of their A-level grade that they feel they have some degree of control over, and accordingly, essays are written and re-written. (How the teachers find time to continuously re-evaluate these essays I cannot imagine.) Even as I write this, the teacher is being asked again, by another student, permission to re-submit course work essay.] Her reply:

TR: I think you have to accept at this point that your course work folder may finally not be all you want it to be, and it's time to start looking to the future.

The work continues quietly; almost guiltily, with that shamefaced industriousness that is typical of any group of students which has learned a moment too late just how far they can push the teacher. She sets them a timed question to write on tomorrow:

"Comment on the function and importance of the imagery in Othello."

TC: And I'd like you to say now what you think that might be.

SR1: It adds interest.

SR2: It adds colour.

TS: It expresses the character's emotion - it's a way of making things clear to an audience. How?

SR3: It gives us something to relate to, doesn't it? - it makes things more vivid and clear.

TQ: Why might it be that some characters have specific imagery associated with them and others don't?

SR: Some are more important- the more important characters have the most images.

TA: So the more important characters; the ones higher up on the social scale, have more developed imagery. Think about some of the parts in the play that are particularly dramatic, and see how the imagery is affected in these parts of the play - you could certainly look at Othello's speech about how he wooed Desdemona, can't you? It can heighten particular moments. It can make a character more knowable. You should look at the imagery in terms of the overall idea of the play- you should ask yourself what, in essence, is Othello really about.

SR: Lack of communication.

TA: Yes, and deception- What else?

SR: Jealousy.

TA: Jealousy is really central to it, isn't it? See how the images highlight this- have you all got these ideas fairly clear in your mind?

(She once again reviews their discovery about imagery as a guide-line for their set piece of writing.)

TC: You've got to know which quotations support your argument. What sort of things might find their way into your introduction?

SQ: Does it matter if you use "I" in the essay?

TR: The AEB moderators aren't going to care about that- what they are looking for is your engagement with the text: and believe me, the moderators can tell when students have been told what to think, when they get a whole pile of essays with the same opinions and the same examples... there's a big question mark hanging over the whole enterprise when a moderator feels like he's not marking the student's work, but the teacher's. You would do well to prepare your own responses to this play.

[OC: This frankness is greeted with that small measure of fear that muffles the unasked question- "But what if our own responses aren't good enough?"- mingled with the realization that perhaps they will be good enough; and if parroting really is recognizable and scorned; sincerity really is valued, then perhaps they have a chance.]

The tenor of seriousness now established, they proceed with their work in a markedly happier mood. They know the limits, and they know the rules- these having been clearly established, it only remains for them to test their own capabilities within them. The teacher is smiling:

TC: You must remember, that at one time, the man was sitting there thinking about what images to use- each one of them is a choice- ask yourself, "Why did he make them?"

SR: I don't think he sat there thinking about it- what would be really clever is if he managed to do this without thinking much about it at all.

(There is general assent - however:)

TRD: Yes, but you know that every word is a decision- think about your own attempts at writing haiku.

(There is general laughter at this; and general assent.)

TS: There is a plan: there is a reason behind these decisions.

Time has run out - the class breaks up with a scrambling for top sheets for their essays.

### Field Notes- Lesson X A

Teacher: Teacher B

Time: 11:40 - 12:55 am, Tuesday 12 March, 1991

Present: Four females; two males - upper sixth.

Class begins approximately eight minutes late.

Jenny and Claire have devised an exercise- Alison reads out from a stack of cards random scenes:

SS: "Othello has a fit" - "Emilia speaks her mind; Desdemona sings the willow song; Roderigo begins to doubt Iago."

The object of the exercise is for the other students to line up the cards on the table in the order that the scenes occur in the play. Each card contains a summary of the action of the scene, with one or two significant lines. After 10 minutes of this:

SS: Well, we've got loads left, and we don't know where any of them go.

At this point the teacher invites them to open their texts and have a look at Act IV, asking them to refer to the text and see if they can work the remaining five cards in. "Othello has a fit" has been misplaced, far too far along towards the end of the play; likewise "Lodovico comes in". A good deal of shuffling around ensues.

[OC: It strikes me that even actors in rehearsals, under normal rehearsal circumstances, do not usually cotton on to the order of scenes in a play until the run-through, the first of which usually occurs toward the end of the rehearsal period.]

Despite the fact that the numbers indicating the order of the scenes are written on the backs of the cards, the students do not resort to this tack. The day is uncomfortably muggy- there is, consequently, a good deal of stretching and yawning- I feel it too; and cannot attribute it to boredom.

When they are satisfied that the play is in its proper order, they turn the cards over to see how well they have succeeded.

TC: Look at those and try to fix the sequence in your mind.

SA: It might be a good idea for all of us to write this down.

At this point, the teacher then reads out the cards, providing where possible the causal links between scenes; for example,- "This causes Othello to have a fit" or "To which Iago reacts with pleasure". They all dutifully write this down. They do not, at this point at least, write down any Act, scene, or line numbers. They have a little laugh over "some insinuating rouge", written on the card mistakenly for "rogue". The cards stop at "Desdemona asks Emilia if she would ever be unfaithful." The teacher then asks the class:

TQ: Where do you want to go from here?

Two girls suggest that they look at the ways in which Othello's character changes from I,iii to IV, i. This they do for a time, silently. The lesson is largely student -directed- and it is clear that their primary concern is with character; personality changes, motivation, and reaction. It seems clear enough that left to their own devices, it is still the supposedly untenable universality of human emotion that fascinates them. While the students continue their writing, the teacher begins assembling the cards and various other writing and magazine articles into a binder; presumably for use as a revision resource.

At 12:42 They discuss their findings. The question: "How has Othello changed?"

SR: He's less confident in his speech- because there's this doubt in his mind, his speech becomes less fluent.

TA: Yes... in that first scene, when he's being confronted publicly, and criticized by Brabantio, he's unruffled.

SC: But he's trying to impress...

TQ: Is he? What do you feel?

(There is a general murmur, though no direct reply.)

TRD: It's conviction, isn't it?- he's in love- and it's good and he wants people to know that- he's not ashamed.

SC: I still think he's just trying to impress- but I'll keep my mouth shut. I just don't agree.

TR: You shouldn't do that - have another look at it and see what you think.

She then asks for textual evidence of the changes; reads out several lines from the play and asks:

TC: Are they echoes of what Othello's said earlier? One of the things that people have to watch out for in writing for examinations is to not just compare things superficially; you have to look at the actual lines.

Another student comments upon the way in which Desdemona has changed:

SS: First [she is] confident, then confused and frightened.

They have a bit of discussion about what Desdemona actually means when she says, "I will not stay to offend you" - they seem struck by the possibility that this was not coldly delivered, but in the heat of upset and emotion. (They do not, however, seem to have absorbed the element of self-loathing.) The teacher's comments focus rather on re-directing their attention toward the consistency in Desdemona's character, citing "I have not deserved this" as proof of her character's consistency as valid as any expression of Desdemona's complete devotion; subservience, even, to Othello.

The bell rings and the class continues three minutes past the appointed time. To be continued tomorrow.

#### Field Notes - Lesson XI A

Teacher: Teacher B

Time: 11:40 - 12:55 am, Wednesday, 13 March, 1991

Present: Two males; two females - upper sixth.

A glorious, balmy, warm spring day- the first of the season

The teacher has set them a task to work on in pairs: two working on aspects of Emilia's character; two working on aspects of Othello's character. She lets them work on their own for some time, and then comes round to talk for a time with the first pair working on aspects of Emilia's character, referring them (no doubt to the Capulet's Nurse) to Romeo and Juliet from another text on the shelf to point up a "common theme"; she then goes round to work for a time with the other pair, working on Othello.

[OC: Throughout the whole of this lesson, the relentless rhythms of a Ghanaian dance class are beat upon the floor above us to the accompaniment of drum beats and



punctuated by wild ululations. This makes it extremely difficult for me to hear anything that is being said. At 12:30, thankfully, the dancing has stopped.]

The teacher then asks who wants to go first; the pair working on Emilia begin, their questions and discoveries follow below:

SS: Emilia shows concern about who's perpetrated the rumours about Desdemona.

SR1: She doesn't hold any doubts about her.

SR2M: She's concerned but not fearful to have her alone with Othello.

SC3F: I think she actually fears the worst here.

TA: I think that's confirmed by later events.

SA: Certainly when she comes back again

TQ: What actually happens there? There's a section where Desdemona and Othello are alone together before Emilia returns.

SRF: He won't listen to her; he's just expressing all his anger at her.

TQ: Why is he angry at her? (she reads:) " I understand a fury in your words, but not the words"

SR1: She won't actually swear...

SR2: He thinks she's dishonest through and through... he's self-convinced now and nothing's going to change his mind.

TQ: But what does that speech say?

SR: Because he is convinced, her innocence makes it worse.

TQ: (She reads to "I here look grim as hell") What's that all about? ...What's going on inside him?

SRM: He's experienced injustice before: two-facedness in other people, and it makes it difficult to accept the truth.

TQ: What emotion is it that's causing him these problems; supposing she had been unfaithful- why can't he accept it?

SR: (Severally) His pride.

TA: He's humiliated by this...what else would you like to add?

SR1: Whether Emilia actually suspects Iago

SR2: She suggests that there's a reason for Othello's jealousy and she could actually link Iago's promotion to this idea.

TQ: Any other points? Because I'd like to read you an essay written by another student and save Othello until next time.

The question set for the essay she is about to read out to the class is: "In what ways are your knowledge and understanding of Act IV, ii deepened, and how does the scene contribute to the development of major themes in the play." She suggests that they jot down whatever they might find useful. She then reads out a closely argued and sensitively written essay on language as a reflection of character, with close attention paid to textual matters: use of imagery, simplicity of speech, dramatic irony. Peppered throughout with phrases like "Our anguish is compounded by" "fierce loyalty and love", "sense and a sense of justice"- which speak of the characters as real people, but, once again, in a novelistic sense, "in order to engage our sympathies"- all of these revealing the close engagement with the text on a personal level which examiners are so taken with.

The essay is long, and judging from the reactions on the students' faces as they hear it, intimidating in its quality. The teacher continues reading right through the lunch bell- the thematic conclusions centre on loyalty and betrayal; appearances vs. reality, with discussion as to whose trust is deserved; whose loyalty. The essay draws its focus eventually away from a discussion of merely Act IV, ii to touch upon these themes' importance to the entire play. When she finishes, a student asks, incredulously:

SQ: Did he write that in an exam?

There is general relief when it is revealed that this is in fact a course work essay. One student comments, ironically:

SS: Great! I've got a great chance.

Speculation about the grade leads to a general consensus that it must be an A.

TC: Though I'm sure someone's bound to find something wrong with it. She reveals that the essay is in fact a part of an evaluation /standardization exercise. The students, it seems, are anxious to see this essay at the zenith: concerns after class about, as ever, grades.

## Field Notes - Lesson XII A

Teacher: Teacher B

Time: 11:40 - 12:55 am, Tuesday, 19 March, 1991

Present: Four males; one female.

I arrive ten minutes late. One of the boys is doling out parts to read through Act V; he has enlisted the teacher to read through the women's parts - the girl reads Cassio. He begins by noting:

SS: This scene is very important. Here's where Iago sets everything up.

(They read it through with little feeling: though the teacher has considerably more acting talent as evidenced by her reading of Bianca - "O notable strumpet!" raises an embarrassed giggle from the group.) They stop after scene i.

SQ: Why do you think Iago is taking so many risks now to wreck his revenge on Othello? Does he really think he can get away with it?

SR: I think he's gone so far he can't turn back.

SQ: Is it hate driving him or..?

SR: No, I think he's scared - it's made him quite mad...he enjoys the risk; it's quite exciting.

SQ: How does Iago manage to win everyone's confidence; what does he do, how does he adapt himself?

SR: He's adapting to each character: he's like a chameleon.

SQ: Do you think Roderigo's a convincing character?

TQ: Why is Roderigo actually prepared to do this?

SR: I think he's dragged along with Iago-

TQ: But what are the satisfying reasons? What's in it for Roderigo to have Cassio out of the way?

SR: Desdemona.

TA: Yes. Iago's said so, "I've rubbed this young quat almost to the sense" he's been working on him all this time...Iago's aware of how crucial this is- What does he stand to gain with Cassio and Roderigo out of the way?

SR: They can give evidence against him...and he says, "He hath a daily beauty in his life that makes me ugly"- he hates Cassio for that.

TQ: Has Iago intended for Desdemona to be killed from the beginning?

SR: No.

TQ: But what has happened in the last act that makes it necessary- Emilia becomes suspicious.

SQ: Does it work on the stage? Do you think it works dramatically?

SR: It's very confusing. There are all these bodies lying around and a lot of running about.

TR: It's the type of scene that would probably work better on film.

SQ: Do you think this scene is less convincing because it relies so much on coincidence of movement?

TRD: But that's what's happening, isn't it? It's confusing for the audience but it's also confusing for the people on the stage.

SQ: Emilia's quite supportive of Iago here- do you think she's still putting up a front?

SR: Yes, I think so.

TC: I would beg to differ here: I think she's caught up with the circumstances. Here's someone she likes who's been injured and she does think that Bianca's involved in this. And it's interesting to compare this with what she's been saying in the previous scenes. Imagine how it's been for her. For Bianca I mean - she's been accused of everything and all she's done is have a man round to dinner.

They continue with reading aloud the next scene. In the course of this, they come upon a difference in their editions- it will be interesting to see if they comment upon this.)

SQ: Why does Othello kill Desdemona, even though in the speech preceding he clearly loves her?

The boy who replies struggles to express his ideas about Othello's confidence being undermined by Cassio's supposed betrayal. The teacher comes to his aid:

TA: He does seem to feel he has the right to judge her; that's true of many of the men in this play. Think how they treat Bianca when after all prostitutes exist because men want them to.

SQ: Do you think Desdemona's scared or do you think she's composed; how would an actress play this?

SR: I think she is scared; I think she does know.

TQ: Where's the first place where she realizes that he's going to kill her?

SR: Well, she doesn't exactly run out in the street screaming that he's going to kill her.

SR: She says, "I hope you will not kill me" (Laughter at this.)

SR: He's a soldier- she knows he can kill.

TA: And there's that public humiliation- she never expected that from him either.

SQ: What's the significance of Iago drawing his sword on Emilia?

SR: He thinks if he got away with all the other murders, he can get away with this too.

TQ: With everyone watching? (Laughter again) While she's determined to speak out, he's just as determined to shut her up. He's reacted in a typically masculine way. It's recognized if you kill your wife in a state of passion, then it's somehow excusable. It tells you something about the lower status of women.

SQ: Do you think it's inevitable that Othello's going to kill himself, or is it a kind of anti-climax after Desdemona's death? Do you think it would take away from the tragedy of the play if he didn't do it? Do you think it's the same kind of rational decision as when he kills Desdemona?

SR: No. Before, his thoughts were very clear.

SQ: Do you think the betrayal of Iago is the thing that actually destroys him more than Desdemona's betrayal, since it was Iago that he trusted the most?

SR: No.

TRD: Take a look at the speech right before he does kill himself. (She reads this through, explaining as she goes)...obviously, if you put yourself in his position: you've mistakenly murdered your wife, you've lost the honour that you had, you've put your trust in an evil man rather than a good...the only reasonable option is to exit.

SQ: Do you think Iago's successful then?

TQ: But Iago hasn't meant to get at Othello, has he? He's come within a whisker of being successful.

The bell rings and the outside noises preclude my further hearing. More to come tomorrow.

### Field Notes - Lesson XIII A

Teacher: Teacher B

Time: 10:10 - 11:25 am, Wednesday 20 March, 1991

Present: Three females; two males, upper sixth.

Three boys have set a task: to compare the opening speech at V,ii, "It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul," and the later one in the same Act at line 260 "Behold, I have a weapon..." and I,iii "Her father loved me..." Another task - compare Iago in I,i to Iago's scene with Roderigo, and his scene after he's been found out.

[OC: It is interesting to see that when left on their own, the immediate focus is on character and language; not politics, subversion, appropriation, or power. The question is,

is this because the practical criticism approach is so ingrained as to be second-nature, or is it simply because there are universal values in the plays that students quite naturally recognize?]

At 10:40 they begin on Iago at V,i:

SS: His behaviour is more characteristic...his control over events becomes more limited- Iago also seems a lot more bitter and open about it, Iago's whole plot seems to come down to personal bitterness.

TQ: For example?

SR: When he says "Cassio has a daily beauty in his life"

TQ: Is Iago a character who reveals himself to us or is it just a matter of furthering his plans?

SRF: I think he says how much he hates Cassio and that's something he wouldn't have done earlier on.

SRM: I think as he loses control of the situation he plays on people's prejudices to divert attention away from himself; like when he tries to blame Cassio's death on Bianca.

TQ: What sort of comment can you make on speeches like "Guiltiness will speak, this is the fault of whoring?" What do you find yourself thinking? Why should Iago say that?

SR: He knows that she'd be a fine suspect, and because she's a prostitute people are willing to believe she could do it.

TA/Q: He's shaping the way that people understand the situation...how certain he makes it sound- so, there's that to notice; what else?

SRF: In his early speeches with Roderigo, Iago is more controlled, and more believable. I think it's easy to believe that Roderigo would give money to Iago- he's so pathetic.

TQ: Where in the text can you prove that?

SR: "I follow him to serve upon my turn."

TQ: To sum up, what you would say about his language in Act V, is what?

SR: After the duel, he doesn't have all these fluent speeches.

TQ: Let's try and be specific shall we? Look at line 125

SR: He's not trying to persuade anyone, he's just trying to defend himself.

TRD: He's very calm, detached, and cool, isn't he?

SR: The imagery is gone.

SQ: Why does he actually confess? He would never do that, would he?

TR: He thinks all women are false, doesn't he.

They continue, moving on to Othello:

SS: He talks about Desdemona with a lot of imagery; describes her as a rose, talking about flames and light. He still loves her, but he believes he has to kill her, "else she'll betray more men."

SR: We were talking about this yesterday- when Othello is confident in other people he feels good about himself, and when people betray him it has consequences: he has to kill her.

SR: So you think he has to kill Desdemona to restore his confidence?

TQ: Is it confidence or self-esteem?

SR: His pride; he's a very proud man.

TQ: How does this speech compare with the later one; "Behold, I have a weapon"?

SR: It's more military.

TQ: What about the opening lines?  
What's the contrast there?

SR: He repeats himself in the first speech.

TA: There's a lot of uncertainty and self-examination in that first speech- this is a private speech; the other is a public one, isn't it? "Be not afraid, tho' you see me weaponed" -that's an echo of "Put up your bright swords" but the second part of that speech-"Where should Othello go?" does what? what about the idea of justice?

SQ: I don't understand in the speech "Justice would break her sword."

TR/Q: Even justice would break her sword: I have so much difficulty believing it. Even this bit about "This sorrow's heavenly" Do you believe there are forces outside ourselves that make us do things? What does he mean by that?

SR: Maybe he's using it as an excuse- I think it's cultural, because he comes from a different culture, he can't believe it.

TQ: What do you feel needs to be said about these two speeches and what they say about Othello?

SR: After he's killed Desdemona, he's more like Othello in the beginning of the play.

TA/Q: It's very dramatic language, but you could, I suppose, say that about the first speech in Act V. But what's actually happened to him by the second speech; if you were directing him, what would you do?

SR: He's in despair, isn't he?

TA/Q: "Whip me you devils"- what's he actually asking for?

SR: He wants to be punished.

SR: Doesn't he learn to communicate with Emilia by the end of it- he wasn't willing to listen to any woman before this.

Time runs out. Tim agrees to photo-copy his notes for the rest of the group. There are still queries about grades, and this is the last class that will be spent on Othello.

## Springfield Grammar School

### Field Notes Lesson I B

Teacher: Teacher B

Time: 2:20 - 3:30 pm, November 27, 1990

Present: 11 females; 2 of which are Asian: five white males. All lower sixth formers.

This class takes place in a smaller room, with a partially dropped ceiling. There are three bulletin boards; one with official notices, including a photocopied review of Dub Poetry, and a poster announcing the details of the BBC's young playwright's competition. Student's essays on Death of A Salesman decorate one board; on another, there is a comic strip synopsis of Pride and Prejudice. Nearly half the room is being used for storage purposes; for empty bookcases as well as full. The entire room feels like the interior of an enormous cupboard. The full bookcases are stocked with various English texts, including Everyman and the Medieval Miracle Plays, The Shoemaker's Holiday, The Way of the World, The White Devil, and The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales.

This group is working on The Tempest for course work. Prior to my visit there today, they have been working on devising 10 minute adaptations of the entire play. One student's work has been photo-copied and distributed among the group to be read, critiqued, and discussed by the others. This particular version is focused powerfully on a black/white (literally) representation of good and evil, and changing configurations of power between an "evil pentagon" consisting of Trinculo, Stephano, Sebastian, Antonio, and Alonso; a "holy Trinity" of sorts consisting of Prospero, Ariel, and Miranda, and a block of disruptive forces that have been identified as Ferdinand, Gonzalo, the Boatswain, and Caliban. The students have been left to work in pairs on this critique, which they do to varying degrees, some more actively participating than others. The teacher initiates the discussion:

TQ: Could I have a volunteer pair to begin?



SR1: To someone who didn't know the play, the story would not be clear because nothing is explained.

SR2: The whole point of the play is magic; and magic is not explained.

SR3: Well that's just one of the points of the play.

SR4: Everyone's got their own interpretation.

TRD: Let's not get our feet too far off the ground- while interpretations may differ somewhat, there are certain things that will remain essential.

SR: I don't know if it's possible to tell the story in ten minutes...

TRD: I don't imagine that Julie would want the story to go on stage without production notes-

The teacher then puts Julie's offering in the context of a balletic production of Hamlet, she enables the students to see Julie's playlet on its own terms, and interrogate the relationships that she has chosen to highlight. The students then question the configuration at the centre, one suggests that Gonzalo should be switched with Ariel. They also query the presence of Trinculo and Stephano among the royals- in re-framing the discussion in terms of hierarchy, order and disruption, rather than good and evil, another student suggests that Caliban has a rightful claim to the island:

SA: Yes; I don't think much of Prospero at all for the way he treats Caliban.

TRD: Perhaps we should be asking what is the nature of a good ruler?

SS: They've got to protect the people.

SRD: It's a bit dodgy to put people into good and evil categories- everyone's got a bit of both.

SC: What about Miranda? She's pure and good.

TQ: But why is Miranda good?

SR: She hasn't any experience of anything but the island, she's completely innocent.

TS: Prospero has protected Miranda from the world, and he knows he must go back to this imperfect world.

SR: Gonzalo mentions his idea of the perfect society...

TR: There has never been a perfect society; there have been fairly good stabs at it.

They look again at the diagram, this time arguing for replacing Ariel with Ferdinand in the diagram. Time has run out, and the lesson will continue tomorrow.

## Field Notes Lesson II B

Teacher: Teacher B

Time: 2:20 - 3:30 pm, 28 November 1990

Present: Same group as previous lesson; lower sixth form.

Something different- the hall is free and the students may use it during this lesson for their ten minute Tempests. Hang on- false alarm- a drizzle of rain means games inside ( and no use of the hall for this lesson.) General disappointment all around. We're back in the classroom, investigating Julies' 10 minute Tempest scenario.

[OC: I have been called into the discussion- again, unexpectedly- to share some of my ideas that I mentioned privately to the teacher after the last class. These are met with the terrified ( and terrifying) absolute silence that greets a newcomer and a new accent.]

Today's discussion, focused on Julie's proposal is concerned with production values- staging, costumes, clothing; the importance of clothing and status. They discuss this in modern terms:

TQ: Why in hospitals do doctors wear white coats? Why will the tea lady in the same hospital wear something rather different? Where else do you see it?

SR1: Church.

SR2: The courts.

SR3: Cooks.

TQ: What are the ways in which people are distinguished in the army?

SR: Stripes.

TQ: How then could we distinguish between good and evil people; the degrees of good and evil in these characters' costumes?

Prospero is seen to be a Merlin-like magician; Trinculo, the jester; Stephano the butler.

(These costumes are distinct from the basic black/white theme originally proposed.

Discussion then returns to the black = evil white = good idea as a guide to costuming:)

TQ: What about Ferdinand- are you going to serve him up in white?

SR: He would have to be white.

TQ: What about Gonzalo? He has done something to save Miranda and Prospero, but did he do enough by choosing to stay in that imperfect society? Should he be in grey?

SR: He should be in white.

TA: You could say that he should be entirely in white. That is the point of declaring yourself when you are among evil people- still, you have to indicate that he is a member of the group.

SR: He could be in white with a black waistcoat underneath.

Focusing on Ariel now, the teacher stops to describe a production that she has directed, as well as Derek Jarman's boiler-suited Ariel, and the Barebone's production's Ariel. How would they costume Ariel in this production? One student suggests Ariel in blue; Caliban in green.

TS: You might want to experiment with Ariel as a disembodied voice.

SA: Yeah; just swing a chiffon across the stage every now and then.

(This promotes some laughter and enthusiasm.)

They turn to the possibilities for the storm; how to portray the storm?

TS: You can do it with music.

SS: That's naff.

SS: You can have hip-hop. I saw a production of Midsummer Night's Dream that had rap in it... it was wicked!

(Again, general din ensues.)

TRD: Will: you were about to make an utterance- it's such a large group it's got to be shared.- What are you going to do with Prospero's speech?

SR: You can do it by dancing.

TQ: How? Open the text and have a look at the speech.

They look at I,ii from line 67, Prospero's long speech to Miranda, beginning "My brother, and thy uncle, call'd Antonio,-"and are told to jot down the essential history that a movement piece would have to convey at this point. This group is talkative, but visibly more serious-minded about the task at hand than the less talkative students in this same teacher's Othello group. There are quite a few exceptionally bright, creative and articulate students in this group; some with a clear experience of theatrical production that contribute a good deal to class discussion. At 3:05 they are asked if they have had enough time- some say yes, some no.

TQ: Let's just look at some of the ideas we have . What might be the first picture?

SR: Antonio being seduced.

TQ: How would you show it?

SR: You could have Antonio really small; Prospero really big.

TA: You could do it with puppets or dolls.

SR2: You could do it with crowns.

TQ: What would be the next thing?

SR: The way that Prospero loves his brother, and the way that he also loves his books.

TQ: What next?

SR: Prospero losing his dukedom.

TC: How?

SR: Shadow play.

TC: Anything else? Light, sound and movement are all important here...(no response)...Let's move on...

She directs their attention to the following scenes in the ten- minute script, and notes that the log-carrying incident is missing; Trinculo and Stephano aren't there. She then asks:

TQ: What happens to the blessing of the couple? What's the most important bit at the end? It's the businesss of reconciliation, isn't it? The recognition of wrongdoing and its forgiveness. What about the ending?

[OC: Throughout this lesson I should add that the ceiling is alive with the pounding of basketballs and running feet. The classroom is very overheated, and it seems that the same four students in this group of sixteen are the main contributors to all class discussions.]

As time is running out in this lesson, she gives them a homework assignment for next Tuesday. They are to look very closely at the ending of the play. Reflect on what is actually happening and how we might interpret the end of the play. Then they are to look at the Garfield version's ending and compare them. They are also told to look at Acts IV and V.

SQ: Do you want this written down?

TR: Yes, please. Any difficulties and problems see me before Tuesday please.

## Field Notes- Lesson III B

Teacher: Teacher B

Time: 2:20 - 3:30 pm , 4 December, 1990

Present: 8 males, 7 females, (2 Asian) lower sixth

Today, thanks to good weather, we are in the gymnasium where students can act out their ten minute Tempests. Several groups ask for more time; one (female) group seems perplexed- their "project" was in fact Julie's, whose work had been discussed so thoroughly that the rest of the girls in the group had not bothered to do anything more. Nevertheless, they are given the task to tell the story of The Tempest in ten minutes. The groups have self-selected as follows: one group of three boys and three girls; one group of five boys, and one group of four girls.

After about fifteen minutes, the girls' group comes over to the teacher for consultation about a bit of text that they want to act out, but they seem concerned about the length of Prospero's speeches. The teacher suggests that they read his speeches through, shouting out Prospero's most important words at twice the volume; then shouting out the most important words only.

After a while it becomes clear that some brain-storming is underway- the boys' group have put a makeshift costume (an overcoat turned back to front and buttoned up the back) on one of the boys in the group. They have incorporated some of the athletic equipment as a piece of scenery. Their efforts, from what I can gather, are very physical, involving three of the boys struggling with the overcoated fourth, while the fifth boy appears to direct.

The mixed group, amid much giggling from the girls, are apparently enacting the banquet scene. One student has wrapped her face in a jumper: another costume. She is apparently Ariel delivering her "men of sin" speech. A floor mat been incorporated as the banquet table; a ruler as the sword. One boy in the group directs the others. Another costume in a later scene consists of a scarf, wrapped around the head of another girl, apparently Miranda. Two boys take the parts of Prospero and Ferdinand in the prelude to the masque, the other girls come dancing by; clearly the goddesses.

At 3:15 it is performance time. The boys group goes first. Their director is seated with book in hand, explaining the scene. A "mad" Prospero is brought in and thrown by his attendants onto a couch, while the director/psychiatrist asks, "Mr. Prospero, what's the trouble?" The narrative continues; with Prospero reacting violently to the question, "What exactly happened in the storm?" then continuing with his tale, basically "telling the story" of the tempest raised to bring the ship to the island. The psychiatrist only asks "What happened" questions and does not use this role to probe the character in any depth. At 3:23 the teacher cuts the narrative short; asking if they could skip ahead to the end- the boys reply that they "hadn't really sussed the ending." The teacher then asks the rest of the group for suggestions as to where the promising idea of the "Mad Prospero" might go- how for example might the attendants be incorporated? But by this time it is 3:27 and there is too little lesson time remaining to explore this in any kind of depth. Class is dismissed.

[OC: Observing this brave attempt on the teacher's part to incorporate some kind of active work into the lesson, it became very clear that in order for an active lesson to succeed, it must be very tightly organized and highly teacher-directed. While these students had all been given ample time to prepare their presentations prior to coming to the gymnasium to try them out, it was clear that these efforts were last minute improvisations. All the groups abdicated creative responsibility to a single "director", and none had a clear idea of practical ways with which to work within the limitations of the set task. The only group which might have learned something was the girls' group- had they followed the teacher's advice- to read through Prospero's long speech, shouting out the important words at twice the volume, and then shouting out the important words only, they would have come away from the experience having had the words in their mouths and the discretion in their heads as to which of these words was essential and which was not. This, in fact, is a standard active teaching technique, but whether the teacher chanced upon it by luck or experience I cannot tell.]

## Field Notes- Lesson IV B

Teacher: Teacher B

Time: 2:20 - 3:30 pm, 18 December, 1990

The students have been set an assignment in the teacher's absence: to set themselves questions about The Tempest. When invited to share their efforts, volunteers are not immediately forthcoming; finally one boy offers up his questions, which the teacher then writes up on the board:

1. What is The Tempest about? How does Shakespeare convey his ideas in dramatic form?

The teacher suggest that they might like to try a spider graph approach in writing an essay plan. She gives them a few moments to think, then at 2:35 she writes "Tempest" in the middle of the board, draws a circle around it, and as each student contributes an idea, she writes their ideas up on the board, each representing another "leg" radiating out from the body of the "spider":

TC: You won't have thought of everything, but let's hear some of your ideas:

SR1: Treachery.

SR2: Revenge.

SR3: Magic; Forgiveness.

SR4: Power

SR5: Nature and nurture.

SR6: Romance

TC: Why do you say "romance" rather than "love?"

SR: I suppose they're interchangeable...

(The teacher writes "Romance/Love" on the spider graph leg, but does not comment further on this.)

SR7: Colonisation.

(There is a slight altercation between students over this last "colonisation"; the teacher lets it remain.)

TQ: Which of these would you like to explore first?

SR1: Love- it's in the whole play!

SR: It's girly. (Giggles)

Nevertheless, girly or not, they carry on with love. They attempt to list and characterize the love relationships in the play. They decide that there are three types of love relationships going on in the play; "real" love, which characterizes the relationships between Prospero and Ariel, Prospero and Miranda, Prospero and Gonzalo, and Alonso and Ferdinand; "ideal" love, which characterizes the relationship between Ferdinand and Miranda; and "foolish idolisation" between Caliban and Stephano. One student argues, using Venus and Cupid and the Midsummer Night's Dream fairies to support her case that fairies, (i.e. Ariel) can love. Speaking of the relationship between Prospero and Ariel, one student comments:

SS: He rewards Ariel because he frees him.

TA: (Writes on board:) Faithful service is rewarded with Freedom.

SS: Ferdinand and Miranda get married.

TA: (Writes on board:) Healing. Preparing a Future. Enemies become Familiar.

SA: That in a way was coming through in Romeo and Juliet as well.

The student is invited to expand upon this, and in doing so, the discussion comes round to the theme of characters having or taking or wanting things they are not entitled to. The listing continues:

SR1: Caliban wants Miranda.

SR2: Antonio and Sebastian want to kill the king.

TQ: What do they learn? Are they changed by the end of it? Can you see any connections between some of these ideas?

SR1: Power and Magic.

SR2: Power and Treachery.

SR3: Power and colonisation.

TQ: Can you see how this would work as a way to plan an essay?

[OC: Students' responses seem to indicate that they feel that there are too many answers to the question "What is The Tempest about?" despite the teacher's repeated advice to hone in on a focused answer; and prioritize. She seems reluctant to address the issue that the question as phrased would require a series of volumes to answer completely.]

She finally concedes:



TS: There is no right answer- you will come up with a good answer or a not so good answer.

She then returns to the question of what is learned by the various characters by the end of the play. Speaking about the sense of "intangible displacement" that Shakespeare achieves through the use of the island locale, the students seem a bit confused by the use of the word "intangible". The teacher explains this in terms of the way one feels when one is displaced out of one's home town, away from the loved ones- this example is particularly apt for this class, as one of its most promising students is recently arrived from another part of the country and new to the group. Relating then, this idea of "intangible displacement" to Prospero, Stephano and Trinculo, Antonio and Sebastian, she concludes (and writes on the board) that the play is about :

Inner States  
Being Human  
Finding Self

Asking then what the end of the play teaches, these responses are coaxed out of the students, and also written up on the board:

Learning one's place  
Learning from others  
Learning from mistakes  
Learning responsibilities

Tomorrow, it turns out, there isn't to be a class. The teacher asks if this discussion has helped; apparently yes, it has. The Christmas Holidays are now upon us.

\*\*\*\*\*

As it happened, this was to be the last time that I observed this class working together on The Tempest: after the Christmas holidays, the class was handed over to a PGCE student for her teaching practice. Study on The Tempest was indefinitely suspended, while the students worked on The House of Mirth with the student teacher. This was a large enough disruption I felt to substantially distort the continuous process of classroom learning which I wanted to chronicle. Given that, I opted at this point to concentrate my observations on the two Othello groups instead.

APPENDIX B  
CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS 1990  
MYRTLE SCHOOL  
Field Notes: Lesson I B

Teacher: Teacher C

Time: 1:20 - 3:30, 28 January 1990

Level: Year 13 students.

Sex/ Race Distribution: Twelve females; one male. All white.

Myrtle School is a large comprehensive situated at the eastern edge of the city. The school itself is well maintained, and students' art projects line the walls and fill glass cases on prominent display (most of these, at the moment, having to do with various aspects of popular culture - sculpted hamburgers and comic book heroes figuring prominently). There is a large and friendly reception area. The few students that I see walking through the halls while classes are in session are neatly groomed and courteous. I introduce myself at the reception area, and am then quickly escorted by a young male student to the faculty room where I have arranged to meet with the head of English prior to observing his class.

This group of year 13 students are finishing their work on As You Like It which they have been studying as a non-examined text. Because it is so late in their study of the play, I will only be observing this one lesson with this group. The class is held, temporarily, in a very small, converted store cupboard of a room. There is evidence of major construction work going on in this area of the school building, and the store-cupboard is serving for a classroom until the construction work is completed. As the class progresses, the sound of what the teacher calls "some poor mammal in distress" (but what in fact sounds more like either the mechanical din of a power tool or the best efforts of a beginning tuba player) competes mightily with students' attempts to hear and to speak. The teacher has an easy sense of humour and copes well with the almost insurmountable distraction of the noise.

Students are seated around a large rectangular configuration of five tables pushed together in the middle of the room. Parts are given out, and working with the Penguin

editions, they read out Act V, scene i of As You Like It, the altercation between Touchstone and William, who are both vying for Audrey's affections. At the end of this scene, the teacher turns to the only boy in the class and says:

TS: That's one romantic complication sorted out - good for sorting out country bumpkins in discos. You should remember this Paul, the Touchstone method.

He fires a series of questions at them, all of which are pointed toward the tidying up of the romantic loose ends:

TQ: What's happened to Adam? Is he dead? Who else hasn't got hitched up to someone yet?

These are answered variously by the group; once he is sure that all the complicated plot elements are understood, he asks them to carry on reading, stopping at V, ii, 50: "I can live no longer by thinking." - and then asks for this line to be repeated, presumably so that students will think about it. There are several attempts to try reading aloud V, ii 75-106 "once more with feeling"; giggles abounding at each of Rosalind's "And I for no woman!":

Phebe: Youth, you have done me much ungentleness  
To show the letter that I writ to you.

Rosalind: I care not if I have. It is my study  
To seem spiteful and ungentle to you.  
You are there followed by a faithful shepherd:  
Look upon him, love him; he worships you.

Phebe: Good shepherd, tell this youth what 'tis to love.

Silvius: It is to be all made of sighs and tears;  
And so am I for Phebe.

Phebe: And I for Ganymede.

Orlando: And I for Rosalind.

Rosalind: And I for no woman.

It is to be all made of faith and service;  
And so am I for Phebe.

Phebe: And I for Ganymede.

Orlando: And I for Rosalind.

Rosalind: And I for no woman.

Silvius: It is to be all made of fantasy,

All made of passion, and all made of wishes,  
 All adoration, duty and observance,  
 All humbleness, all patience, and impatience,  
 All purity, all trial, all observance,  
 And so am I for Phebe.

Phebe: And so am I for Ganymede.

Orlando: And so am I for Rosalind.

Rosalind: And so am I for no woman.

Phebe: If this be so, why blame you me to love you?

Silvius: If this be so, why blame you me to love you?

Orlando: If this be so, why blame you me to love you?

Rosalind: Why do you speak too, "Why blame you me to love you?"

Orlando: To her that is not here, not doth not hear.

after which the teacher comments, to the girl reading Rosalind:

TS: You know the only thing that matters; your gender. You're running the whole show.

During this pause from reading out the scene, the teacher stops to ask " a school question" about the dramatic device being employed here.

TQ: "This is known as ...?"

SR: Dramatic irony.

TQ: Do you think you have the right to control people like that?

SR: Yeah!

TS: But poor old Phebe! But she's not an aristocrat, so she doesn't get the attention that others deserve.

He sorts out the couples: Oliver and Celia, Rosalind and Orlando, Touchstone and Audrey, Phebe and Silvius and notes that Touchstone and Audrey don't quite fit in, and that Celia and Rosalind have from the start gone their separate ways in the forest. The girls are attentive; clearly enjoying this. The "singing" of "It was a lover and his lass" reduces the lot of them to near hysterics - the teacher's strategy is to bring in the entire group on the "Hey, Ho, Hey Nonino!" which they find unbearably funny for some reason. One of the girls asks at this point:

SQ: Do they always have to sing so badly in the plays?

TR: Actually, they probably would sing it absolutely beautifully, but Touchstone would slag it off anyway.

Before beginning V, iv They lay bets on how many marriages will happen in this scene. On the stage direction at line 25 -Exit Rosalind and Celia- the teacher comments, to the girl reading Rosalind:

TS: Off you go - I expect to change your costume.

He stops at line 60 to draw attention to the cynicism of Touchstone's view of Audrey and the country copulatives:

Touchstone:... A poor virgin, sir,  
an ill-favoured thing, sir, but mine own; a poor humour  
of mine, sir, to take that that no man else will. Rich  
honesty dwells like a miser, sir, in a poor house, as  
your pearl in your foul oyster.

He then sets up the scene for them, making them aware of probable changes in costume before they begin to read through the Hymen masque. Throughout all of this, the students reading this aloud make small errors in pronunciation and emphasis that the teacher does not correct. He is instead complimentary and encouraging. After the great unravelling of the plot at line 151:

Second brother: Let me have audience for a word or two.  
I am the second son of old sir Rowland  
That brings theses tidings to this fair assembly.  
Duke Frederick, hearing how that every day  
Men of great worth resorted to this forest,  
Addressed a mighty power, which ere on foot  
In his own conduct, purposely to take  
His brother here and put him to the sword;  
And to the skirts of this wild wood he came,  
Where, meeting with an old religious man,  
After some question with him, was converted  
Both from his enterprise and from the world,  
His crown bequeathing to his banished brother,  
And all their lands restored to them again  
That were with him exiled. This to be true  
I do engage my life.

he stops again to explain Duke Frederick's conversion, and Celia's true status, adding finally:

TS: Lucky that happened, or Shakespeare wouldn't have known how to end the play.

Rosalind reads through to the last line of the Epilogue, and the teacher comments:

TA/Q: Tumultuous applause! So - what do you think of the ending then?

SR: It's all happy-ever-after, isn't it?

TC: Well, everyone gets married - it's not exactly the same as "happy-ever-after", is it? Not always. In a funny way it's all about conversion. I have a plan. I'm going to give you three or four areas to think about:

1: Women in charge - To what extent is that true?

2: Is it "happy-ever-after"?

3: Is the forest 100% O.K. to begin with?

4: Who are the people who represent real world values and on the other hand, what are the fantasy elements that are played out in the forest?

You can work on this in groups of one, two or three or you can do it all together if you like. By three o'clock you will have chosen one or two of these and be prepared to talk about them.

The class is left to get on with this task, working quietly at their seats. At 3:00 promptly they commence their discussion, beginning with discussion on the question of women in charge. One of the girls offers:

SS: Rosalind is in control because she is a man - People don't listen to women, they only listen to men.

TC: Prove it. From somewhere in the play.

Someone does, quoting aptly. The teacher continues:

TQ: Alright - if women are such wimps, then why does Orlando fall in love with such a jelly head as Rosalind?

SR1: It's love at first sight.

SR2: I don't believe in that!

The teacher here, much to the class's amusement and amid a bit of giggling, waxes slightly tongue-in-cheekily lyrical about the very real possibility of love at first sight; predicting that this unbelieving student will one day glance over the top of her martini glass across a crowded room at some perfect stranger and be utterly smitten.

Admonishing her to think back, when that inevitable day comes, to her youthful cynicism he then brings the discussion back around to Rosalind, and asks:

TQ: Where does her power operate?

SR1: In the forest, where she's in disguise.

SR2: It's just people who are in love that she can control.

TQ: What about Touchstone and Audrey? They're quite apart from all this control. If that's so, what does he represent? How would you describe him?

SR(Various): Cynical. Realist. Courtly. The fact that he's a clown- he's playing a role; it's ironic.

TA/Q: He also doesn't change. Why is he successful? Think about it. There's no hurry on this. Is her [Rosalind's] power going to operate when she gets back home? Are women going to be in charge of the court? Remember the court at the beginning and the macho violence and the wrestling. If the forest was so great, why do they go back?

SQ: Now that Rosalind's had a taste of power, won't she be a bit miffed about giving it up?

TA/Q: Think about it. To go from a place of masculine , to one of androgynous values - think of a scheme for what happens. I want to go back to Touchstone: cynical, realist, ironic - that's Jaques, too, isn't it? What's the difference?

SR: Well, Jaques hasn't got a girl.

TQ: Why is William in the play?

SR: He's someone for Touchstone to boss around.

TA/Q: And you know Touchstone is going to succeed. If we were going to make a chart of fantasy and reality in As You Like It, where would Rosalind fall?

SR: On the fantasy side.

Time has run out, and the class is dismissed with many questions still left hanging in the air. The discussion throughout the long double period lesson has been animated and thought-provoking despite incredibly cramped conditions inside the cupboard cum classroom, and the loud disruption of the construction work being carried on next door. This being their final lesson on As You Like It, this will be the only time that I will be observing this particular class at Myrtle School.

APPENDIX C  
 CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS 1991 - 92  
 ALMA GRAMMAR SCHOOL  
 Field Notes: Lesson I C

Note: Student responses in this appendix will be classified as given by male or female students with an M or F accordingly.

Teacher: Teacher D

Time: 11:20 -12:00 am, Thursday 10 October 1991

Level: A level Theatre Studies, Lower sixth formers.

Sex/ Race Distribution: Four males; five females - all white

The class meets in a small, clean, carpeted room with built-in storage cupboards along one wall, a row of high windows along the opposite wall, a white board to the front of the room, along with a teacher's desk and video recorder, and a series of framed RSC theatre posters along the back wall. Three long tables are arranged in a "U" shape around the periphery of the room, opening out toward the front and the teacher's desk. The four girls sit along the table directly to the teacher's right; the four boys sit at the table across the back of the room. The building where the classroom is housed is a relatively new addition to the campus: with its cinder block construction, double glazed windows and institutional carpeting, the ambience is decidedly modern.

This class begins with talk of a trip to Spain being organized for the May half-term break. Progress on their performance and film projects is discussed briefly- they are currently working on "talking head" video monologues- one boy offers the idea of T.V. as a mirror, and he is encouraged to incorporate this into his project.

Paper Three responses for the Theatre Studies A-level require first-hand experience of productions. In preparation for this paper, the group and their teacher have been this past Tuesday, to a London production of The Winter's Tale. The teacher begins discussion by asking for their reactions to it:

SRM: I didn't find the Shakespeare boring, but Public Parts [production of Marvellous Boy] had more for me.

TS: I'd like you to be jotting down what questions we might be asking ourselves about both productions.



SQF: What do you mean?

TR: Well, for instance, we've talked about staging things in the round, and now we've had the opportunity to see a Shakespeare play done in the round: that should throw up all kinds of questions for you about how that actually can work.

(The students take some quiet time here to think and write.)

SQF: What did people think about the singing and the music in the Public Parts production?

TA: A nice open question - the singing was the music.

SRF: I think the live music, as in the Shakespeare play- they had the woman playing the violin- it was more involving.

SRM: Well, Shakespeare didn't have a tape-recorder, did he.

TQ: Why are we more involved with live music?

SRM1: Well, the actors are still in the scene.

SRM2: It's more real - it's still a performance.

SRF3: If they make a mistake, it's original.

TQ: What about the Public Parts performance?

SRF1: It made the play...

SRF2: It set the scene for the period of time.

SRF3: It helped the actors express their emotions...through their singing, the message was very strong.

TA: Another dimension-

SFR3: Another form of communication, really.

SRM: It unites the characters; when they weren't singing the characters were arguing, but when they sing, they were in harmony and it brought them all together.

TA/Q: It's a unifying thing- anything else?

SRF1: I thought the solo violin was ever so powerful.

TC: The violin was used in an interesting way- both offstage and onstage.

SQF1: Did the total lack of set in 'Winter's Tale' make you concentrate more on the play?

SRF2: I think that when the play got long-winded, if there had been a set, you would look at the set and not concentrate on the play.

SRF3: I thought it was great- especially in that scene with the king in his black coat- all you could see was him; in the harvest scene it was like a breath of fresh air.

SRM: You could imagine the room that it's in.

TA: If we're being allowed to, encouraged to, made to imagine things - that puts a whole different emphasis on the audience's part in this.

SRF: I think it was good that we could see it from above; especially the dancing- we could see the patterns; I'm sure other people did.

(One student comments that Florizel was uncomfortable in the round...)

SQF: What advantages or disadvantages did you find when the play was performed in the round?

SRM: It makes it seem more real- like you're looking at events as it's actually happening- when it's all in front of you, it's like watching T.V.

SRF: I find it a bit annoying; I couldn't always see people's faces.

SRM: But that's like real life, isn't it?

TA: It's an advantage and a disadvantage as well.

SRM1: Well, they did a lot of moving around for everyone to see- while the king is ranting at the queen.

SRM2: And when that bloke [Autolycus] nicks the guy's wallet- he had to walk all the way around to show everyone he'd done it.

(The teacher leads them to some general conclusions about the ways in which staging affects the blocking of a play.)

SRF: One thing I really liked was the way in which the theatre in the round gave you the chance to use marvellous lighting effects- like when the queen was standing in the centre with that spot on her, and those shapes and colours coming out.

(The teacher at this point explains the use of gobbos, and passes around a theatrical lighting supply catalogue. They then move on to discussion of the bear.)

SRF: I was disappointed that we didn't see the bear.

SRM: We couldn't though- he would have had to trample over the baby because the baby was in the middle.

The bell rings, but before the class is dismissed they are given a homework assignment- to write up their impressions of both productions while they are still fresh in their minds- sketches can be included as part of their notes.

## Field Notes: Lesson II C

Teacher: Teacher D

Time: 9:30 - 10:10 am, Saturday 9 November, 1991

(Students enter discussing the appalling lack of heating in borders' rooms: when all students arrive, class begins.)

This lesson follows on after a class trip to see an F.E. College production of The Comedy of Errors presented by a group of Theatre Studies students in Bath. Most students in this group, save one, have not seen The Comedy of Errors before; most, in fact have not read through the play, so that the performance we have seen is the first impression that most students will have of this play. The teacher begins by posing two questions: 1- What did we think of the play? 2- What strengths or weaknesses were evident in this production?

SRF: I thought that there were weaknesses in the scenery- when she pulled out that door- a good idea that was really Brechtian, but Shakespeare isn't Brecht- some of the acting was really good; some abysmal- some things we laughed at had nothing to do with the play.

TC: Emma's raised a lot of good points- Do we need to do Shakespeare the way Shakespeare might have done it?

SRF: They didn't have any music.

TQ: Is this a play that invites music?

SRF: Yes- a bit more music without any lyrics under the mime in the beginning and they could have used the lights more; especially in that beginning.

TQ: Anything else?

SRF1: They didn't sing- they could have sung- put some music to the lyrics.

SRF2: The costumes were good.

TQ: How did they work?

SRF1: They were exactly the same.

TQ: Were they?

SRF2: They weren't- they were different- like reflections. Their hats were at different angles and the colours were different.

TQ: Mitch: what did you think?

SRM: Some of the people didn't say their lines very well- they just said them for the sake of saying them- they weren't reacting at all.

SRF1: Even when they weren't talking- the girl who played the prostitute just stood there while everyone else was panicking.

SRF2: I didn't like the costumes- one of the girls had trainers on- and it just detracted from the Shakespeare.

SRF3: One bloke had good shoes [she describes them] they looked rather "Shakespearean" - but that tall bloke had his trousers in his socks and a safety pin in his waist.

SRF4: That tall girl with the ginger hair was really annoying-

SRM: The guy with the yellow trousers put on a dismal cockney accent.

SRF: But the kitchen wench was brilliant.

TA: Yes, she was- she's not actually in the play itself.

SRM: That bloke in red didn't know his lines.

SRF: He said "oh shit" on the stage when he couldn't remember his lines. I thought, you don't do that!

TQ: What about the play?

SRF1: It's lighter- not as heavy going as Julius Caesar or Romeo and Juliet.

SRF2: And it's easy to follow- it's funny.

SRF3: And it's got opportunities to put a lot in.

TQ: Does it offer opportunities for a lot of interpretation?

SRF: It could be made a lot more exciting than what we saw.

TQ: What do you think about the predictability of the story line?

SRF: It's obvious- you can see the first scene and then just kind of reel off what happens next.

SRF: I was a bit surprised that that bloke's [Egeon's] wife was a nun. I mean, they're supposed to be virgins, aren't they? They're supposed to be married to Jesus.

TQ: What's the message behind her being an abbess; the motives?

SRF: She probably thought her husband was dead.

SRM: There were an awful lot of women in it.

TQ: Why do you think that was?

SRM: More girls take the course.

SRF: Maybe in that production more of the blokes were doing lighting- they often like to do the technical side of things.

TRD: What about the opening of the play?

SRF: They should have had a black out.

TRD: That's a production point: we need to talk about the play.

SRM: It's quite narrative- there's very little action. They could have done more with the lights.

TQ: Who's telling the narrative?

SRF: The old guy who's going to die- and the people in silver masks act it out.

TQ: Is that actually in the text? The mime? Have a look.

SRF: Well it says, "Enter the Duke; enter Egeon and other people"- so they could be acting it out.

TQ: Does it actually say that?

SRF: No, it doesn't.

TQ: What do attendants do?

SRM: Listen.

TQ: So they added that in. Why?

SRF: It's almost dictating what your mind should be seeing.

SRM: It wouldn't be clear what was going on without the mime.

SRF: It's a really boring speech without the mime.

TQ: Do you think it's harder for us to follow than it was for Shakespeare's audience?

SRF: Yes- because of the language. Didn't he use a lot of mythology in his plays?

TR: Classical, yes.

SRF: Well, I think people would have been more familiar then with that kind of story. And lots of other writers were writing in that way.

SRM: I liked it more than The Winter's Tale.

The bell rings and class is dismissed. Discussion will continue on Tuesday.

## Field Notes: Lesson III C

Teacher: Teacher D

Time: 9:40 - 10:20 am, Tuesday 12 November, 1991

Present: Four males, four females; lower sixth form.

A cold morning- students (and teacher) all suffering with too much winter; one student has been to Matron. There are announcements regarding a trip to see a Greek play in London, and a work experience placement at the Bristol Old Vic which requires a seminar attendance. Today is Tuesday; the seminar is Friday and the teacher has only just now received the information.

The teacher sets the task for students to look at the long opening narrative and to decide for themselves how best to get the story across, given that in the last class's discussion, there was a consensus that the whole of the play depends upon the audience's understanding the 100 odd lines in which Egeon explains his plight. Students are asked as well to consider the situation in which the story is told. (The Bath F.E. College production which these students have seen and discussed, featured the opening sequence accompanied by a mime played out by actors in black clothing and silver masks.) Egeon's opening speech, which will be the focus of this lesson and many to come in the weeks ahead, is reprinted in its entirety below:

A heavier task could not have been impos'd,  
 Than I to speak my griefs unspeakable;  
 Yet that the world may witness that my end  
 Was wrought by nature, not by vile offence,  
 I'll utter what my sorrow gives me leave.  
 In Syracuse was I born, and wed  
 Unto a woman happy but for me,  
 And by me, - had not our hap been bad.  
 With her I liv'd in joy; our wealth increas'd  
 By prosperous voyages I often made  
 To Epidamnum, till my factor's death,  
 And the great care of goods at random left,  
 Drew me from kind embracements of my spouse;  
 From whom my absence was not six months old  
 Before herself (almost at fainting under  
 The pleasing punishment that women bear)  
 Had made provision for her following me,  
 And soon, and safe, arrived where I was.  
 There had she not been long, but she became  
 A joyful mother of two goodly sons,  
 And, which was strange, the one so like the other,  
 As could not be distinguish'd but by names.

That very hour, and in the self-same inn,  
 A mean woman was delivered  
 Of such a burden male, twins both alike;  
 Those, for their parents were exceeding poor,  
 I bought, and brought up to attend my sons.  
 My wife, not meanly proud of two such boys,  
 Made daily motions for our home return;  
 Unwilling I agreed; alas, too soon  
 We came aboard.  
 A league from Epidamnum had we sail'd  
 Before the always-wind-obeying deep  
 Gave any tragic instance of our harm,  
 But longer did we not retain much hope;  
 For what obscured light the heavens did grant,  
 Did but convey unto our fearful minds  
 A doubtful warrant of immediate death,  
 Which though myself would gladly have embrac'd,  
 Yet the incessant weepings of my wife,  
 Weeping before for what she saw must come,  
 And piteous plainings of the pretty babes,  
 That mourn'd for fashion, ignorant what to fear,  
 Forc'd me to seek delays for them and me,  
 And this it was (for other means was none):  
 The sailors sought for safety by our boat,  
 And left the ship, then sinking-ripe, to us.  
 My wife, more careful for the latter -born,  
 Had fasten'd him unto a small spare mast,  
 Such as sea-faring men provide for storms;  
 To him one of the other twins was bound,  
 Whilst I had been like heedful of the other.  
 The children thus dispos'd, my wife and I,  
 Fixing our eyes on whom our care was fix'd,  
 Fasten'd ourselves at either end the mast,  
 And floating straight, obedient to the stream,  
 Was carried towards Cornith, as we thought.  
 At length the sun, gazing upon the earth,  
 Dispers'd those vapours that offended us,  
 And by the benefit of his wished light  
 The seas wax'd calm, and we discovered  
 Two ships from far, making amain to us,  
 Of Corinth that, of Epidarus this,  
 But ere they came - O let me say no more;  
 Gather the sequel by that went before.

Duke: Nay, forward, old man, do not break off so,  
 For we may pity, though not pardon thee.

Egeon: O, had the gods done so, I had not now  
 Worthily term'd them merciless to us:  
 For ere the ships could meet by twice five leagues,  
 We were encounter'd by a mighty rock,  
 Which being violently borne upon,  
 Our helpful ship was splitted on the midst;  
 So that in this unjust divorce of us,  
 Fortune had left to both of us alike  
 What to delight in, what to sorrow for;  
 Her part, poor soul, seeming as burdened  
 With lesser weight, but not with lesser woe,  
 Was carried with more speed before the wind,  
 And in our sight they three were taken up  
 By fishermen of Corinth, as we thought.

At length another ship had seiz'd on us,  
 And knowing whom it was their hap to save,  
 Gave healthful welcome to their ship-wrack'd guests,  
 And would have reft the fishers of their prey,  
 Had not their bark been very slow of sail;  
 And therefore homeward did they bend their course.  
 Thus you have heard me sever'd from my bliss,  
 That by misfortunes was my life prolong'd  
 To tell sad stories of my own mishaps.

Duke: And for the sake of them thou sorrowest for,  
 Do me the favour to dilate at full  
 What have befall'n of them and thee till now.

Egeon: My youngest boy, and yet my eldest care,  
 At eighteen years became inquisitive  
 After his brother, and importun'd me  
 That his attendant, so his case was like,  
 Reft of his brother, but retain'd his name,  
 Might bear him company in the quest of him;  
 Whom whilst I labour'd of a love to see,  
 I hazarded the loss of whom I lov'd.  
 Five summers have I spent in farthest Greece,  
 Roaming clean through the bounds of Asia,  
 And coasting homeward came to Ephesus,  
 Hopeless to find, yet loth to leave unsought  
 Or that or any place that harbours men:  
 But here must end the story of my life,  
 And happy were I in my timely death,  
 Could all my travels warrant me they live.

Initially, they are told to list the essential points of information within the narrative, and to think about ways in which the situation in which the story is told can also be conveyed as a basis for improvisational exploration. Much quiet and assiduous writing ensues.

SQF: So, was it the twins that went to Syracuse? Did they go with the mother or the father?

TA: I know how you feel...this is why we've got to make it clear to the audience.

Clearly there remains a degree of confusion about what actually happens in this narrative, even for these students who have actually seen the play performed.

SQF: Where it says "My wife, not meanly proud of two such boys" - does that mean she wasn't proud of the boys?

(The teacher directs her to the notes and enables her to puzzle it out for herself)

SQM: Sir, did Shakespeare make up some of these words? Honestly, I've never heard of half of them.

TR: I don't really think he did make up that many words - the problem is that he had a very large vocabulary and many of the words he uses are archaic.



[OC: He asks me to confirm this- I offer the student "honorificabilitudinitatibus" from Love's Labour Lost as a real word in Shakespearean usage at its utmost limit. The student is dumbstruck.]

Time is running out in this period- the teacher instructs the students to think, once they have got the essential information, about how they would present it. The assignment is to be finished for prep.

#### Field Notes: Lesson IV C

Teacher: Teacher D

Time: 11:20 - 12:00 am, Thursday 14 November, 1991

[OC: Today the class begins short of half its numbers due to a Maths exam re-take; some time goes by while the rest of the class is being fetched. While we are waiting, the remaining students enter, sheepishly, 15 minutes late.]

The teacher asks them how they want to divide up into groups for improvisational work; they agree to work as one big group and one girl takes the initiative to lead them.

SSF1: Separation of the twins is important.

SSF2: Show the shipwreck: two different mothers.

SSF3: But it's a story within a story- we need to know about Egeon and the Duke.

TA: I think that's right Claire- we need to see that situation.

SQF: Does anyone want to read their list of points out so I can see if I've missed anything?

(Silence)

TA: Everyone seems a little bit shy- why don't you move your chairs out and get into a circle so you won't feel quite so nervous about it.

(This is done; quickly.)

TS: What we should be trying to get over- Claire has already alerted us to -the fact that it's a story within a story.

SRF: I thought it would be a good idea to have the Duke raised to show his authority, and Egeon somewhat lower, and have a spotlight moving round as he goes from point to point of his story.

TR: Well, we'll have to forget the spotlight for an improv in here, but we can begin to work with the idea of working round the room in a circle.

SRF: I thought too that if we had the light colours changing from yellow to say darker and darker as the story goes on...

TRD: But how are we actually going to improvise it here? - we need some more ideas.

SRF: We could mime it, we could set it to music, we could talk the whole thing.

SRM: We could have like a servant standing next to him miming the story as he told it.

SRF: Since the Duke wants to understand the story, he could come down as the story's being told and brought into the improvisation.

TQ: What else?

SRF: We could have the crowd showing reactions like when she's having the baby the crowd can be really excited and you can show the Duke reacting to those emotions.

SSM: I'm having trouble imagining this as an improvisation- it's such a major play that I'm imagining something a bit further developed.

TR: You've got to realize that improvisation is not something necessarily that you do to show other people. Professional acting companies takes scenes out of plays and improvise around them all the time in order to discover things about the play.

SRM: Well, one thing I thought we could do is to have Egeon in multiple masks; that he could take them off as he went along and represented different characters in the story.

TQ: What would you like to see, say the RSC doing improvisationally with this opening scene?

SRF: I know I shouldn't go back so much to the production that we saw, but I would have liked to have seen them talking more slowly; perhaps chanting a bit- almost in slow motion as they acted things out.

TC: Right. We know what we need to convey in this opening bit. Why don't we work with the idea of the Duke being elevated and working around a circle as the story unfolds?

(Emma, whose idea this is, takes on the role of director here; gives out parts, and arranges the students with the Duke elevated UL, Egeon below UR, and the remaining students standing in a semi circle that begins UL next to the Duke and curls round DR. When she finishes she says:)

SSF: I don't know quite what we're going to say yet.

SRF: (The Duke) I want to find out why he left Syracuse.

SRF: (Egeon) I'm going to die so I'm really depressed so I just get on with it; get it over with. Everyone else should have their heads on their knees and look like little cocoons, and they open up like little flowers as I tell the story.

TS: I think it's important that we know why Egeon's being put to death- it's not just because the Duke doesn't like his face.

SRF: Isn't it because the Syracusans aren't allowed in the other place?

TA: Ephesus.

SAF: Yes- the penalty is death.

TC: But there's a reason why - we need to know why this penalty applies.

The bell rings, class ends - the students are left with the task of finding out why for homework.

### Field Notes: Lesson V C

Teacher: Teacher D

Time: 11:20 - 12:40 p.m. Monday 18 November, 1991

Present: Five females; four males; lower sixth.

(This class, having been decimated for Saturday's meeting opted not to do The Comedy of Errors; accordingly, I did not observe that class. However, they did discuss briefly ways of improvising the opening scene. The teacher begins with a re-cap of that discussion :)

SSM: We started out with my idea of having puppets, either full scale or miniature, or having actors act out Egeon's storm. Then we came up with the idea of there being a shadow play behind a screen.

TA: Yes- we talked about the Indonesian tradition of shadow plays- the great epics they do. What's the advantage of doing it as a shadow play?

SRM: You don't have to worry about a set.

SRF: You don't need to worry about costumes.

TS: We talked about using the actors' bodies as part of the set.

SRM: For the ship for example.

TC: Can we set this up and do it? First without the strong light- imagine that the gauze isn't there and give some action to these words.

(A male student takes objection here to the idea of "buds" and "cocoon" put forward at the last meeting.)

SRF: It doesn't have to be "buds"- it was just a way of describing how you move.

TC: If you go about it limply with the idea that it isn't going to work- then it won't; it will be "naff". But if you try with the idea that it will work; then it might...We discovered something about the Duke, didn't we- what was it about the Duke that we discussed?

SRM: He feels sorry for Egeon.

TQ: How do we know that?

SRM: Because he gives him more time to get the money.

A student is sent off to fetch notes on the last class's discussion about this. While she is out the teacher asks one of the boys to explain his ideas about the levels of characters in the opening scene of this shadow play. Clearly the Duke is highest to indicate his rank- the students arrange themselves in height order: the twins in this class placed at opposite sides of this tableau. Meanwhile, another student lists the points of the story that are essential to tell.

They decide that half the characters must be behind the gauze -those actors who are miming the action of the past- and the other actors who are in the here and now as members of the court and citizenry will be in front of the gauze. The teacher comments:

TS: I think this is a really good idea- because this is a way to convey the shadowy world of the past, and present at the same time.

The list of points on the board is then considered; some are eliminated- the starred items are retained:

1. Egeon's birth
2. His marriage.\*
3. Voyages for his work.\*
4. Death of his factor.
5. Wife becomes pregnant.\*
6. Wife follows him abroad.
7. Wife gives birth to twins.\*
8. In the same tavern, a poor woman gives birth to twins.\*
9. Egeon buys other twins to serve his own sons.\*
10. Wife wants to go home to show off her new offspring.
11. Egeon not as ambitious, but they sail.\*
12. Terrible storm.\*
13. Egeon didn't fear death, but his wife did.
14. Sailors took their boats and left.\*
15. Wife ties youngest twin to the mast with a slave twin; and Egeon ties other twins to his timber (two on each timber).\*
16. Mast splits due to a rock hitting it.\*
17. Both parties taken and looked after - (a) Wife by fishermen. (b) husband Egeon taken up by a passing ship.\*

(Taken up to line 123.)

Throughout discussion of these points, students bear in mind how they will show it from behind a gauze. For example:

SQF: (Of 7.:) How can you show they're twins if you can't see them?

SRM: They can have hats that are the same.

TA: They need to have some symmetry so you can see it; the similarity.

SSM: (Of 11., 12.:) If you have the people who are making up the boat moving up and down, when they get to the storm they can move up and down a lot.

TC: We need to look at number fifteen closely- how does that happen? What will we need to do?

The identical twins in this class here reveal which of them is the latter born- it happens that one is six minutes older than the other.

It becomes clear that the mast is split- their discussion of what must be included comes to an end.

TS: Right- that's good. Now all we have to do is do it. We know we have to begin with the marriage.

A student directs: Three students stand at the centre, taking the parts of Egeon, Emilia, and the priest. The priest blesses: the couple turn to one another and join hands.

TC: How about his voyages? How will we show that?

(This too is acted out by volunteers from the group)

SRM: She can be wiping a tear from her eye and waving a handkerchief after him.

TA: It's good now, because you're thinking in terms of gestures which have a universal quality.

SQM: When is this going to be set?

TA/Q: That's what we'll have to decide, won't we? (There follows now some talk of the classical names in the play as a hint to the setting.) ...But let's look at this bit: what about her getting pregnant?

SRM: Pump up a space hopper under her shirt.

TS: Remember we're working in silhouette.

SRF: Ah! You could have a fan, and she could open it up on her belly, like this. (She demonstrates- this is greeted with general approval.)

TA/Q: I Think you're fan idea is really elegant. Number six: how about this?

SRF: You could have them both waving to somebody else.

TQ: How about number seven?

SRM1: Deflate the space hopper.

SRM2: We can have the stork!

TA: A sort of jumbo jet fly in and deliver the twins? That does have some appeal, doesn't it.

SRF: You can have sort of a mechanical bird.

TA/Q: You can do whatever you like with this. In the production we saw there was a bit of effort and groaning- bringing a stork makes it rather comical. How do you want to do it?

SRM: Well, he's remembering this, so it will be rather romantic.

TQ: What about number eight?

SRM: You could have the screen divided and have them both giving birth at the same time.

SRF: The rich side should be on a bed-

SAM: A four poster-

TC: How will you show that?

SRF: A cut-out-

SRM: Or it could be people-

TQ: How about number nine?

SRF: We'll have to show the mother of the twins sorry to be rid of them.

TC: How will we show that? Drooping is usually a good way to show sorrow-

SRM: Or that you've had too much to drink !

TRD: Arf Arf. How about number eleven?

SRF: If you're looking at it straight on we could get some oars and have everyone seated facing front, so you could see them all.

SRM: When they hit the rock, the figurehead could fall off.

TS: Now we're getting into the storm. We'll need to work with a real gauze in order to actually see it. The bit at number fifteen is very important... there are so many people tied to the mast, we should assume that the mast is horizontal. I suppose that as long as it's clear how they're distributed, you'll be alright. How will you show the splitting of the ship?

SRF: With hands- when the ship splits, have all the hands reaching out towards each other from opposite ends.

SRM1: We could bring in the split screen again-

SRM2: Have a guy with a fishing line catch the wife.

SRM1: Or he could have a net-

SQM2: What's fishier than a fishing line?

TC: You've got to decide at this point what you want the tone of this to be; how comical? With storks and fishing lines, or not?

SRM: You've got to have some funny bits in it or no-one will be interested.

TS: I think the shadow play idea is interesting in itself- but remember, you set the tone of the rest of the production from the opening scene. Have a think about this and we'll talk about this next time.

#### Field Notes - Lesson VI C

Teacher: Teacher D

Time: 9:40 - 10:20 am, Tuesday 19 November 1991

Present: Three females; two males- lower sixth formers.

While we wait for the late-comers, class begins with a review of the essential points that we need to convey in the opening narrative. Eight minutes into the class it becomes clear that the rest of the numbers are off at a maths exam. The teacher begins:

TS: When we look at a Shakespeare play, we may not know all the vocabulary- we ran into the "factor's factor" business yesterday- we don't always know where the emphasis falls, and important to the whole production really is the question of

tone. Two things we can do today- one thing is to look at the technicalities of how that scene could be done with the screen and lights, another is to look at the way we want to deliver the speech itself.

SRF: I just had a brain-wave- you know we're going to have this sheet- why don't we have two slits on either side- we could hook them up with wires to look like mouths to speak- so the sheet itself would tell the story.

TRD: That's good- but don't you then lose the sense of the people; the contrast between present and past that we had yesterday?

SAF: Yeah; that's true.

At this point the decision is taken (because the numbers are small) to adjourn to the theatre (which is still under construction) Without any wing space, stage, or for all intents and purposes lowerable booms; this theatre, I am informed, costs £30,000.00 to heat: it effectively seats 210 people. Somehow I doubt the efficiency of the planning. Still, all of the seating can fold up into the back wall in a matter of minutes, and the entire room can then be used for physical education as well. It is truly a "multi-purpose facility".

Once inside the theatre, we do a bit of problem solving to determine where in this space with its unlowerable booms we could set up the screen for the shadow play. It is decided that the exit doors, central and immediately to the rear of the theatre will be the ideal place. Time runs out and class is dismissed.

#### Field Notes - Lesson VII C

Teacher: Teacher D

Time: 11:20 - 12:00 noon, Thursday 21 November 1991

(One of the twins has had her hair cut- the problem of telling them apart has, for the moment, been solved.) This is noticed and the teacher comments that he had no trouble telling them apart when they were together, but now there'll be no trouble knowing who is who when they are apart. We adjourn to the "multi-purpose facility" - still being constructed, though very nearly finished. The teacher has today brought in an enormous white rectangular parachute silk. Two boys have been sent off to fetch a lighting desk, the other students set about fixing the parachute over the space in the double doors. The two boys return, and when the lighting desk is pulled from its box there are oohs and ahs all around. It is a very impressive dimmer board which appears to be capable of handling over eight dozen lights.

TS: There are 48 channels here that are releasing power on the outputs. Channel 36 over here connects to outlet 36 over there. There is a massive amount of power going through this, but it's very clever, because there are never more than 10 volts going through the actual board. The memory side is here- you can set up all the lights, all the channels, and the memory can handle 120 lighting changes. You program all the changes, the computer remembers them, and it's really rather boring actually when you come to run your show, because you just push the buttons when the time comes and the memory does all the work for you...

During all this the students are clearly fascinated; silent and attentive. The teacher goes off to jerry rig a lighting source to place behind the parachute silk, while the students walk through the pantomime they have discussed in class to represent the important moments in the narrative.

Owing to technical difficulties, for some inexplicable reason the output channels on the dimmer board indicate a power surge but the lights themselves refuse to function. While the students have managed to come up with a number of interesting physical moves, the general disappointment on account of the failure of the lighting board is real.

Class time is over; however the students remain in the theatre for the other theatre studies teacher who now enters to continue her work with the students on a devised improvisation.

### Field Notes - Lesson VIII C

Teacher: Teacher D

Time: 9:30 - 10:10, Saturday 23 November 1991

All present.

At last the difficulties with the lighting in the new theatre have been solved. After consultation with the electrician and the manual for the dimmer board, it has been revealed that the computerized board requires a coded system of address before it can actually begin to function. Interestingly, as the teacher rigs up the board, it is primarily the boys who take any apparent interest in this. There is even an extension lead today, thereby eliminating the necessity for jerry-rigging the wiring.

Once the light source has been rigged, several boys begin to shadow box. After a bit of fiddling with the light source in order to regulate the size of the projected shadows, half the students come over to one side of the screen; half to the other.

The space within which they must work is very small, forcing the students to stand extremely close to the screen. However, the initial action of the marriage ceremony, played out against such a small space actually inspires the students involved to use the smallness of the space to their advantage, positioning themselves within the space to suggest the church itself as well as the ceremony.

The next scene, of the voyages, presents a challenge: how to position their bodies in such a way to suggest a boat without being too (un)intentionally suggestive. At times



this Comedy of Errors looks more like the Kama Sutra: in the teacher's words: "At the moment, there the constant danger that everything we do looks vaguely pornographic."

The bell rings almost without anyone noticing. This class goes by extremely quickly - a Saturday lesson that was thoroughly enjoyable.

#### Field Notes - Lesson IX C

Teacher: Teacher D

Time: 11:20 - 12:40 Monday 25 November, 1991

All present.

Today the teacher has set up the lighting tower, and the parachute silk is being suspended from the boom with string in an attempt to give the students a larger area to play against. Experimenting with the level of lighting, they quickly discover that the light placed on the floor gives the clearest shadow at the correct level.

SQF: How are we going to do the changes in between the scenes? Because people are going to see us moving about behind it.

TR: Good question - how will we do it?

He goes to the lighting board while another student stands behind the screen to test the effect. They decide that flashing the dimmer up and down is less satisfactory a way to signal the change in scenes than having the actors retreating backwards into an arc.

They walk through the marriage scene; the departure scene. They make a fan for the pregnancy moment, and I wonder if, when they have the fan in hand, they will further realize the potential for the use of props. The symmetry of their first attempt at the duel birth of twins proves problematic at first in that the problem of how to deliver the twins; the positioning of the midwives behind them distorts the proportions of the people behind the screen. [OC: It becomes apparent that they must readjust their ideas about depth in stage blocking- the shadow play demands that unless disproportionate sizes are desired for special effect, scenes must all be played out on the same level.] The girls involved in this scene seem reluctant to do anything that ventures too far into verisimilitude.

Their actions are fairly static. Still, they haven't yet begun to cope with the notion of fluidity and the changes from scene to scene.

The boat presents a challenge - how to work people into an object shape. The tableau livens up when the boy who is appointed to be the mast takes it upon himself to open his suit jacket and create a sail as well, and wave it about to suggest a storm. Working about with the image, and with the loan of the teacher's overcoat, they manage to represent a passable sail. The teacher suggests:

TQ: Do we want to give the boat a sense of motion?

But at this point the period is almost over. The students come out from behind the screen from the heat of the light- they are coaxed back into position to add some motion to the storm. Amid much giggling and a bit of frenetic dancing from the sail, they manage to get through the storm at sea. The problem of tying the pairs of twins to the mast makes them think to reduce the scene to a small focus- for the first time the twins have become involved as twins on either side of the human mast.

Finally, the teacher reads through the scene while the students present their shadow pictures behind the screen. It becomes clear that the transition from scene to scene must be fluid, and that the presence of the "shadow" Egeon and Emilia must be consistent throughout. The teacher observes:

TS: We've got gaps, haven't we? Write it up for prep- how can we fill in those gaps, so it looks really smooth; really good.

There's a hurry and a rush to go as the lesson has gone some five minutes over. The teacher has had an opportunity to get some free floodlights, so he and the students clear the theatre building fairly quickly. More tomorrow.

Time: 9:40 - 10:20 Tuesday 26 November, 1991 All present.

Class is being held back in the classroom today due to a conflict with the GCSE Theatre Studies class using the theatre.

Teacher begins with a discussion of the gaps in yesterday's efforts, and asks students to have a look at the text.

TC: One problem that occurred to me is that you're going to need an Egeon out front and behind the screen - any ideas about how you're going to do that?

SRF: One thing you can do is have them on different levels.

SRM: You could have them both in some really outrageous hats.

TA: Yes- you're on the right track- that might be the easiest way to do it; with a hat.

The teacher then asks one of the boys to read out the speech, stopping at intervals to ask what, if anything, at each point will be on the screen. The first gap appears at line 39: With her I liv'd in joy; our wealth increas'd.

SRF: He wants to get on with it; get to the relevant bit.

SRM: He could start out standing close to the screen, then take a step back and actually grow - you could see the shadow growing behind the screen.

TA: That's good- that's the type of fluidity we need throughout...

Next gap at 47: Had made provision for her following me..

TC: How do we show her joining him? She's pregnant and following him- what can we do?

SRF: We can have her walking on the spot, then putting her hand out - over her belly- to show her getting more and more pregnant. And you can have him walking on the spot ahead with his hand out to her, and her trying to catch up...

TC: The buying of the other twins - we really hadn't worked that bit out - and the bit up till where they came aboard. Give it some thought - what needs to be emphasized?

SRF: This may be a bit over the top...but you could have her on her knees pleading.

TR: You shouldn't forget that behind the screen gesture can be very effective- we don't have to rely completely on mime because we have words too.

SRF: We could have the people who make the boat come on while he's saying the bit about " My wife not meanly proud".

TA: Yes, as if the boat almost materializes as a response to her pleading.

They stop at line 76: And left the ship, then sinking-ripe, to us.

TQ: There's a long bit here without a full stop- why do you think that is?

SRF: Everything happens one thing after another.

TQ: Do we want to do anything with the sailors leaving the boat, the sinking of it?

SRF1: You could have the sailors waving goodbye as they leave the boat.

SRF2: You could have the people in the boat just lying down lower and lower as the ship sinks.

The bell rings. The students are set the task of writing up the last bit for Thursday.

### Field Notes - Lesson XI C

Teacher: Teacher D

Time: 9:40 - 10:20 Tuesday 3 December, 1991

All present.

Today there is a bit of confusion as the French oral exams have been time-tabled into the Theatre Studies classroom; this class meets of necessity today in the lighting booth. Today discussion centres on the gaps.

TQ: We found a few dead areas...where do the gaps occur?

SRF: On page five after he talks about prosperous voyages. I thought there would be a gap because they talk about her almost fainting- she should be doing all those things- well she can, can't she? I guess it really isn't a gap- never mind.

TRD: That's alright. I think our problem is on pages eight and nine- where they're fastened on to the mast and then there are the two ships and we never did that bit.

SRF: As they split, we could have a group of people there and there- only show their arms- and have them pulling them in on either side.

TQ:(To the others in the class) Do you like that?

SRF1,2,3,: Yeah.

TC: What about the bottom of page nine- because the story isn't over there- it's the searching; line 124 - looking for them. We hadn't considered it before but we should consider it now.

(At this point he stops to reprimand the students below in the theatre who have been switching the lights on and off throughout.)

TC: So, how are we going to show it?

SRF: We could have a little thought bubble made out of cardboard- and stick people inside. (Laughs)

TR: It's getting very elaborate. We started with puppets, now we've got humans dreaming of puppets!

SRF: I know- we can have the older one pulling away from the father and he can be going like this (puts hand to brow with palm towards the floor in a "searching" gesture) to show that he's searching.

TA/D: OK. How are you going to show his travels?

SRM: You can have him looking for some strange beasts.

TC: How are you going to show that? You need to think about it. What I want you to do now is take it in pairs. With your partner take it in turns to be Egeon and the Duke and read it through to one another. Stop one another if at any point you don't understand what the is saying and explain so you're both sure of what you mean. In the meantime, the other of you underline those words where you feel the emphasis should fall.

(The students move into groups. One group of girls calls the teacher over to ask about the possibility of making cuts, or putting the speech into modern English. His response:)

TC: Isn't that the whole point of the shadow play?

SRF: Yes, I guess so...

At this point, the strains of the grand piano being played below waft up to the lighting booth. Class breaks to watch the lesson below.

#### Field Notes - Lesson XII C

Teacher: Teacher D

Time: 11:20 - 12:40 Thursday 5 December 1991

Present: Two females; four males.

A double period today, in the theatre again at last, to be assisted by Lou, the other Drama teacher. Absence of the twins today has left us without an admirable symmetry.

TS: What I want you to do is walk it through, with one of you acting as the Duke, so we can fill in the gaps, rehearse it, then we'll video it...remember that in any performance the audience is only going to believe in it if you believe in it, so try to keep your concentration up...can you decide because I don't want to impose this decision on you- who will be the Duke- don't be afraid of cross-casting.

(At this point, Emma volunteers and Rowan is nominated to take the parts of the Duke and Egeon respectively.) Rowan is on his knees, as the class had decided some time ago that the Duke should be higher up to indicate his status.

The light behind the screen is lit; an additional back light on the Duke which effectively and significantly throws a long shadow. The other Drama teacher enters the theatre at this point to sit and observe.

They begin. While the Duke reads through the opening lines, the shadow players stand in readiness for the first shadow play- however, they fail to listen to the narrative closely enough to progress from picture to picture.

TQ: What's the problem? Have we forgotten what we're doing?

(At this point they break and come out from behind the screen.)

SRF: Sir, we know what we're doing but we haven't got the cues.

TR: Surely the cues come from the speech.

They take it again. They manage to get through the first picture, but break too quickly.

TRD: Hang on; surely that's a much longer process.

SQF: Are we doing that again?

TR: Yes, please. This is the last time we'll do it with the speech. If it doesn't work then we'll walk the whole thing through from cue to cue.

Again they stop, going back to "Drew me from kind embracements of my wife"- but then they miss the initiation of the pregnancy on "pleasing punishment that women bear.

At this point they decide to stop, come in front of the screen, and walk it through cue to cue so they are quite sure of what words to move on, though it appears that they are unsure of when to move without being told. Difficult to know at this point, also hard to say if it matters, as in the enactment of the words, the meanings nonetheless become clear. They get as far as the delivery of the two pairs of twins, out front, with the lines. This is primarily directed by Emma.

They begin behind the screen again, then stop at "My wife, not meanly proud of two such boys. At this point, the teacher makes a casting change:

TRD: Can I swap Rowan and Nick around? Because I know Nick enjoys a good text.

[OC:A tactful way of injecting some life into the proceedings, Rowan not being the ablest of readers.]

The teacher stops to give some direction on the indication of pregnancy, assisted by the other drama teacher, then takes over the cue to cue. The students do a bit of work on the storm behind the screen. They come round to the front again to sort out the tying of the twins to the mast but they are forced to make a fast substitution as the twins are absent today. They work things out through the tricky interval of the splitting of the ship, and the respective rescuings. They read on.

Rowan suggests that the splitting of the ship can be indicated by a circling, dance-like action, while he himself represents the rock. Then they sort out the pulling in of the boat, the rescuing represented by arms alone, pulling them in from either side.

[OC:The inclusion of Rowan's rotating motion has added immeasurably to the interest of the piece as it has an inherent fluidity, and a natural continuity from sequence to sequence is now possible.

One of the boys in particular has been very inventive throughout, clowning behind the screen. It seems odd that at this level, much of the physical energy and creativity of group drama work still seems more readily associated with fooling

around than with a serious learning process. Gradually, very gradually, this group has begun to feel less self-conscious, freer and at the same time more concentrated on their drama activities.]

They take it again from the top, this time with a video camera in front of the screen. There is quiet concentration and control. In the course of the run through, they miss out one picture alone- and there is one long and awkward gap from the instance of the splitting of the ship to the searching of one brother for another. All in all, the filming is good, as it will afford them the first opportunity to see what they have been doing.

TA: Very good! I only noticed one little glitch. We didn't have Mrs. Egeon beseeching her husband, but all in all a very good effort.

The teacher asks for their write-ups of this sequence. On Saturday morning this group will re-convene.

### Field Notes - Lesson XIII C

Teacher: Teacher D; with guest Teacher/Lighting Designer E

Time: 11:20 - 12:40 Monday 9 December, 1991

All present.

This morning, after about ten minutes of technical difficulties with the video equipment - make that twenty minutes -owing to an extremely old and dodgey video player. Today, half the lesson will be given over to watching the tape of the last lesson, the other half will be given over to chat with a professional lighting designer about lighting for this year's school play, The Caucasian Chalk Circle.

Students watch the video of their efforts very quietly, attentively with a mixture of pride and amusement, particularly through the pregnancy/birth sequences.

[OC: During the ship sequence, laughter at the lack of coordination in the rocking of the boat all but drowns out the volume on the narrative. The "rock" they come to discover, looks like a turkey- this too is cause for much amusement, though often enough too, the laughter seems provoked by that very English self-deprecation that supplants any hint of pride in a job well done; the searching sequence in particular being a case in point.]

TQ: It's very difficult, isn't it, because you couldn't see what you were doing. What's your first impression?

SRF: Pretty good.

SAM: Yeah, pretty good.

TQ: Let's be more specific.

SRF: There really wasn't a very good transition from scene to scene.

TC: What can we do to change that?

SRM: Dim the lights...films change scenes that way.

We watch the video again, with the volume adjusted. During this second viewing, we can actually hear the narrative. There is far less laughter from the students watching this as it is clear now that they are listening to hear whether the words and images cohere, though the "turkey rock" still causes a smile.

TC: If we were presenting this to an audience, what would you take out, what would you keep in? What is working and what isn't working? What would you call a success or a failure in this?

SRF: One thing I think that failed is when people get up they all get up at different times...I thought Rowan's mountaineering was really good...Debbie's pregnancy was good.

TRD: We could take Nick's suggestion of dimming the screen down, but it may be a distraction in itself. I think there are other ways of disappearing. Kev; what did you think?

SRM: I think we could have done it a bit slower.

TQ: Mitch?

SRM: I think the scenes come together too quick - maybe we could have the speaking go a bit slower.

TQ: Debbie?

SRF1: I think the bit around the rock was awful. We needed to be further apart.

SRF2: Falling the same way.

TQ: Was it right to do that bit vertically?

SRM: It might be better to have people crawling, reaching out; it does look a bit like we're ballroom dancing.

TQ: Emma?

SRF: It seemed to flow a lot better than I imagined; there was only one big gap. I thought the beginning bit was really good.

SRM: I 'm unhappy with the ship.

SAF: The figurehead needs to come out more.

TQ: It's tricky- we lost some of the elements of the storm. Do you think potentially this is a good way to do this bit for an audience?

SRM: Yeah.

SRF: I think it has to have a faster pace to it.

TQ: Where would you place the live characters?

SRF: I think you should cut holes for the faces and paint the bodies on like those things at Blackpool.



SRM: One thing I found difficult is that I looked at the pictures and didn't listen to the words.

TQ: Is there a danger of that? Of dividing the audience's attention? Remember that the video doesn't show what the audience would see.

SRF: You could have Egeon walking about, pointing to the screen.

TA: Directing the audience's attention. Good.

The teacher here refers to a production of Julius Caesar that they have seen in which a similar device was used. They here leave discussion of the video and take some time to talk about the lighting design of their upcoming production of The Caucasian Chalk Circle.

The lighting designer comes in and asks all the students individually who they are and what their capacity is in the play - who's acting, who's designing, etc. He then explains how his job fits in to the others' stage by stage, telling them that everyone who's involved with what the production "looks like, sounds like, feels like" sits down and has a production meeting.

He explains that the first step is to go through the script with the director, making notes about what lights are needed at what points in the action. He then translates the notes into a lighting plot, the ordering the lights, lanterns, cables, gels, gobbos, rotaries, etc.

The next role for the designer is to try and attend some rehearsals in order to see how his plot coheres with the blocking and tone of the production.

He then marks the prompt copy of the lighting script with standby and go cues for the stage manager and lighting technician.

Then there's the get-in (with dramatic tales of late hours- hi-diddly-dee.)

Finally there is the technical rehearsal, run by the stage manager; cue to cue- plotting things into the computer.

He stops, then asks:

TDQ: What constraints have I got as a lighting designer?

SRM: What lights you can use.

TDR: Power. There are only so many kilowatts I can use; also the number of channels you can use. What else?

SRM: Shape of the stage.

TDA: Yes - there are physical constraints. If you don't get your scale models right, you're in trouble. What else?

SRF: Cost of the lights.

TDA: Budget. Too right...the other one is really time; it's a huge restraint. Let me think more specifically about this production. What are some of the motifs or themes of this production?

Here the girl playing Grusha notes the leave-taking scene and its sentimentality.

TDS: The messages - circles - that's a real one for me, because you project a light, you get a circle.

TS: Nature.

TDS: The other ones I thought we could use are shadows and silhouettes.

He then talks about ways in which the shadows can be distorted, the dangers of turning a motif into a cliché, and explains his "Zen" theory of lighting design, in which the lighting is best when least noticeable, contributing to the theatricality of the production but not drawing attention to itself.

He then asks the student set designer about colours in the set, and notes the importance of coordinating colours of set and lighting plot.

He talks a bit about uplighting, half-lighting, and circles and how three-dimensional actors can work with them. The bell rings, and they're off.

### Field Notes - Lesson XIV C

Teacher: Teacher D

Time: 9:40 - 10:20 am, Tuesday 10 December, 1991

All present.

To begin with - collection of written assignments that are late; discussion of some suggestions made by others - for example, one student's suggestion that the shadows "freeze" in the gaps.

TQ: We've been looking at the narrative - what feelings do we see, what emotions in a sense are invested in the narrative?

SRF: "Hopeless and helpless".

TA: That's quite a strong phrase - the alliteration of the "H" sounds helps to emphasize that.

SRF: What about determination- he has to tell his whole story.

TQ: Is determination really the word we want?

SRF: Desperation, perhaps.

TQ: What does he say?

SRM: "A heavier task could not have been imposed/ Than I to speak my griefs unspeakable."

TQ: Why is it a burden?

SRF: It brings back the memories.

TQ: What's his current situation?

SRM1: He's a prisoner.

SRM2: He's condemned to death.

TA/Q: He's in a desperate situation- "helpless and hopeless", and he's compelled to tell this unhappy story, condemned to death. So, why is it called The Comedy of Errors?

SRF: It's a bit like black comedy.

TQ: Is it? Do you think that Shakespeare tried to make it funny but failed?

SRM: It wouldn't work - it has to be sad.

SRF: People laugh at dreadful things.

SRM1: If this bit wasn't sad, the end wouldn't be any good at all.

SRM2: It's a transition from tragedy to comedy.

TA: So when Shakespeare says "comedy", it isn't uniformly comic.

SSM: He might have left it open for the actors to interpret.

SSF: I think there's a very thin line between tragedy and comedy. I know when I'm upset, the one thing I want is for someone to crack a joke. If I were going to direct this bit, I'd make the sad bits really over the top and people would laugh.

TQ: We've used this word "Tragedy": what is it?

SRF: When something terrible happens and there's no reason for it like when a couple want a child and it dies.

SRM: Or when it isn't someone's fault like in Romeo and Juliet; they both kill themselves for no good reasons.

SRM: But if I lose my pen, I think that's tragic, but someone else might not.

SRM1: Like Egeon- he has a lot of wealth to start with, but he loses everything.

TA/Q: We saw that losing in The Winter's Tale; but do you think Shakespeare would write a tragedy about Rowan losing his pen?

(Laughter)

SRF: People would probably need to know the tragic bits so that they would understand the comedy that comes later. People laughed at different things then. It was probably a real raver in Shakespeare's day.

(The teacher here talks at some length about Phyllida Lloyd's production of The Comedy of Errors, which was, in his opinion a real raver for our times.

Another girl in the class then digresses at some length to talk about Alan Ayckbourn's Confusions with relation to this.)

TQ: Is Egeon's situation really tragic? What's his tragedy?

SRM: Loss of his family.

TA/Q: In something he couldn't control - a storm. So why is it a comedy?

SRF: It has a happy ending.

TQ: But it has the potential to be tragic. What if Egeon doesn't find his sons; what if he's executed?

(They laugh.)

TS: We're laughing- but you see that structure of confusion and resolution, that tragic potential is the formula for Shakespearean Comedy. Comedy doesn't really mean funny ha ha necessarily.

SQM: What about the other way 'round?

TQ: What do you mean?

SRM: People who have everything in place, and lose it all by the end- that's tragedy.

TC: Can you think of some examples?

SRM: That movie Purple Haze it starts off great, then the guy goes to Vietnam; it's terrible.

SRF: Some of those Mr.Bean sketches start off great but terrible things always happen to him but it's funny.

TRD: Talking about the structure of this play; there's an emotional structure too, the places an audience is taken through. What other words may we pick out from that speech that describe the emotional structure?

SRF1: "Hapless."

SRF2: "Did we not retain much hope."

SRM1: "Piteous."

SRM2: "Sad stories of my own mishap."

SRM3: "Tragic."

SRM4: "Sorrow."

TA: So we're given indications all the time.

SSF1: I don't think he's feeling sorry for himself...I think he's trying to make the Duke feel sorry for him.

TQ: Do any of you agree with that?

SRF1: I don't think he's using it to make the Duke feel sorry for him.

SAF2: I think the fact that he's got to save his life just helps him say it a little bit better.

TQ: He says, "By the doom of death end woes and all. " Rowan, what do you think?

SRM: I suppose yes, in a way I'd feel sorry for myself if those things had happened to me. I don't think he's got much to live for.

SRF: I don't think he really wants to die.

TQ: He says :  
But here must end the story of my life;  
And happy were I in my timely death,

Could all my travels warrant me they live.  
It's not entirely straightforward, is it?

He assigns scene ii for homework. Class is dismissed.

### Field Notes Lesson XV C

Teacher: Teacher D

Time: 11:20 - 12:00 pm Thursday 12 December 1991

All present.

TQ: We were talking about the emotion that Egeon is likely to be experiencing and the general tone of the play, and the broader sweep, and the pattern; the structure of comedy: how does the comedy end?

SRM: Joyfully.

TA/Q: Yes, there's some sense of hope and joy - let's skip to the middle: what about that?

SRM: There's a lot of confusion.

TA/Q: Confusion. (Writes this on the board.) That's a key word - central to any of Shakespeare's comedies. What about the beginning?

SRM: Tragedy.

SRF: It goes from tragedy to something lighter...

TQ: Why isn't it tragic?

SRF: No one really dies.

TS/Q: If he had lost his family for good, lost his life, then it would be much more tragic. (Writes on the board: Opposition/Confusion.) We could put "conflict" because there's conflict between what's happened and what the Duke's got to do, but there's much that's a natural opposition. In the end, what do we have?

SRF: Reunion, resolution.

TA/Q: Resolution's a good word; there's "solution" in it. You find these things in tragedy as well. If you think about Romeo and Juliet- there's generally something to do with authority in the opposition phase as well; there's the Duke in Comedy of Errors, or the parents in Romeo and Juliet. How close is this to real life? ...There's a Canadian critic, Northrop Frye, who thinks that the structure of comedy and tragedy is the same as what you find in the Bible - Any ideas? Any way that you can see how this structure can be put on the Bible?

No response. He then explains how the structure could be applied to Adam and Eve, through their opposition to the authoritarian God, to the identity crisis in the figure of Jesus, to the resolution/marriage of Revelations.

TQ: So why should the Bible have a similar structure to the Shakespeare plays?

SRM: Because the Bible was "The Book" in those days?

TR/Q: It could be that- it could also be something to do with our nature as human beings; with the need for the stories we tell...What form does the confusion take in The Comedy of Errors?

SRM: With the twins.

SRF: (Retells the plot.)

TQ: So what form does the confusion take?

SRM1: The kids.

SRM2: Identity.

TA: Yes - that's more precise than "the kids".

SRM1: I was gonna say that- you were meant to say, "What about the kids?" and then I was going to impress you.

TA/Q: You always do. What is identity?

SRF1: Individuality.

SRF2: It can make you part of a group - a "sheep" - or you can be your own person.

TA/Q: So it's about how we relate to other people, and it's about difference; how we make ourselves separate and apart. Emma, you're a twin - does that make a difference to your sense of identity?

SRF: Yeah- because you're always a twin. It really annoys me because people always refer to you as "the Blackmore twins", people always say, "Oh, what's it like being a twin?", "Oh, I'd love to be a twin." But I don't really think about being a twin until other people mention it - I'm my own person.

TQ: What about the twins in the play, are they alike?

SRM: No. I don't know if it was the actresses we saw, but they didn't act the same. They couldn't be alike because they were brought up differently. You can't start off a personality from scratch; you borrow things from other people.

TQ: Are there any immediate differences you can notice?

SRM1: Their taste in women. One of them fancies the sister.

SRM2: One of them's more outgoing. The other wants to stay at home.

TS/Q: Let's look at the text...(They take parts and read aloud through I,ii; stopping at line 32.) What's this scene here for?

SRM: It's telling you what's happened. This is a citizen, telling you what's happened to thingy -majig.

TA/Q: Egeon. Yes. We could say more about it too. What work is it doing? What's it there for?

SRF: It's a summary of the scene before.

TA/Q: I'm sure it reinforces what's come before, but what else?

SRM1: Well, it explains why they haven't been arrested too...if they're from Syracuse. Otherwise people would wonder why they're walking about.

SAM2: The same fate could befall them.

TA: So there's danger: carry on. (They continue reading through to the end of the scene.) Sort of very impressionistic scene. What impression do we get of the town?

SRM: A very dodgy place.

SRF: He's not happy about his money being lost because it's bound to be taken.

At this point, the bell rings.

TS: Think about the text over the holidays, from all angles. Think about the possibilities of staging; and try to get a grip on the tricky vocabulary as well.

\*\*\*\*\*

There follows a long hiatus, due to the term break, followed by the drama teacher's intense involvement in the following months with mounting the school play, The Caucasian Chalk Circle. This too is an A-level theatre studies set text, so all work is concentrated on the Brecht play during the break from The Comedy of Errors.

\*\*\*\*\*

#### Field Notes - Lesson XVI C

Teacher: Teacher D

Time: 11:20 - 12:00 pm, Thursday 7 May, 1992

All present.

After a four months' break, I return for the second session on The Comedy of Errors since December. The teacher begins by summarizing with the students what was discussed in the previous session:

SRM: That the two characters felt like aliens.

TC: How would we show that?

SRM: People milling about speaking foreign languages.

SRF: The scenery could make the place strange as well.

TA: We tried to decide how much of that "foreignness" to externalize on the set. Particularly at the bit about jugglers and sorcerers-

SRF1: We could light individual characters who could then become jugglers and sorcerers; the set could close in.

SRF2: I just had another brain-wave - we could have some characters in profile - made up on one side normally; on the other, strange, so when they turned, they could reveal a totally weird world.

TA/Q: Yes - a load of Ephesian extras. We talked too about the violence, the difference between the actual beatings and Dromio's account of them, the directorial choices that you have to make. We got into Act II, the scene between Luciana and Adriana, where they speak in couplets - what does that show?

SRF: It shows a close relationship. We made a cross-reference there between Volpone and Mosca.

SQM: That bit there where they speak in rhyme- is that to show a close relationship, or is that just characteristic of how they speak?

TR: I think that's a convention - if they were conscious of it, Shakespeare would let us know. It's a system, isn't it? a bit of the semiotics of the text- a way of letting you know that something else is going on.

They adjourn to the theatre, to experiment with some of the ideas they have been discussing.

TS: I think the best thing to do is to try some of these ideas out in the theatre. The exam sometimes asks these questions; when they ask you how would you prepare an actor in rehearsal for this feeling of strangeness. It doesn't matter if you all speak the same language, as long as it's clear to the audience that you understand each other. We need an Antipholus here - why don't we get started with groups of two or three - Rowan - you enter- desperately seeking Dromio -

A female student here recalls and describes a production they have all seen together which achieved a similar effect to the one they are now working on. They begin.

Rowan enters. A cluster of girls and another of boys, clearly enjoying their "alien" speech onstage. The teacher participates too. Rowan, once he is clearly misunderstood verbally, begins, to gesture. The teacher leads- and it is soon picked up by the others that the gestures are likewise misinterpreted. This goes on for two or three minutes before they break.

TQ: (To Rowan) So, how does it feel?

SRM: Really weird- very difficult to get through to everyone.

TC: Can we see perhaps if there is another way we can intensify that feeling of strangeness - if we put Rowan in a chair - isolate him - have a go at him...

SRF: Laugh at him - that's worse.

What follows is quite interesting: Rowan is sniffed, poked, babbled at as they circle around him. They stop.

TS: (To Rowan) You're starting to react like Gulliver among the Lilliputians!

SQF: Did you feel claustrophobic with all of us poking at you like that?

SRM: Really weird.

TS: I'd like to have a go at this idea of the sorcerers and jugglers.

The teacher reads out the speech, while manning the lighting desk. They work with a cross fade into a single blue light - one of the advantages of a theatre facility with full permanent lighting rig. The change is from "everyday light" into a single eerie blue light to highlight the jugglers and sorcerers. They attempt to make the change from normal to weird evident through their movements, and have quite a good degree of success with it. Particularly "soul killing witches that



deform the body" are absolutely clear. With the aid of the lighting, they are able to produce an improvisational piece with a finished effect.

### Field Notes - Lesson XVII C

Teacher: Teacher D

Time: 11:20 - 12:40 pm Monday 11 May 1992

Present: Four males, four females.

An essay question is set: By analysing Act I of The Comedy of Errors, discuss how you would direct a scene to explore its full potential. The teacher begins by explaining that this was an A-level examination question asked of another play, set for exam practice. He urges them to draw on class practicals as well as performances seen, then moves on to discussion of Luciana and Adriana:

TQ: Luciana and Adriana's costumes: how were we going to dress them?

SRF: Adriana would be quite fancy; Luciana rather plain.

TQ: Why?

SRF: Because Adriana feels rather trapped in the marriage. She needs some way to express herself, so that she needs the fancy clothes.

TQ: Are we happy with Luciana plainly dressed? Why?

SRF: Because she's not really out to get a man.

TA/Q: Is there textual evidence for this? (top of p.22) What about the Dromios - what had we decided about them?

SRM: That one of them kind of exaggerates.

TQ: Why does he feel like a football?

SRM: Because he gets kicked around a lot; he goes back and forth.

SRDF: When is the essay due? Sorry to interrupt...

TQ: Saturday. Let's take a look at Adriana and Luciana - can we have two people read it out? (The teacher then assigns two girls to read through Act II, i, 86 - 116:

Luc. Fie, how impatience loureth in your face!

Adr. His company must do his minions grace,  
Whilst I at home starve for a merry look.  
Hath homely age the alluring beauty took  
From my poor cheek? then he hath wasted it:  
Are my discourses dull? barren my wit?  
If voluble and sharp discourse be marr'd,  
Unkindness blunts it more than marble hard:  
Do their gay vestmants his affections bait?  
That's not my fault; he's master of my state:

What ruins are in me that can be found  
 By him not ruin'd? then is he the ground  
 Of my defeatures. My decayed fair  
 A sunny look from him would soon repair:  
 But, too unruly deer, he breaks the pale,  
 And feeds from home; poor I am but his stale.

Luc. Self-harming jealousy! fie, beat it hence!

Adr. Unfeeling fools can with such wrongs dispense.  
 I know his eye doth homage elsewhere;  
 Or else what lets it but he would be here?  
 Sister, you know he promised me a chain;  
 'Would that alone alone he would detain,  
 So he would keep fair quarter with his bed!  
 I see the jewel best enamelled  
 Will lose his beauty; yet the gold bides still  
 That others touch, and often touching will  
 Wear gold; and so no man, that hath a name,  
 By falsehood and corruption doth it shame.  
 Since that my beauty cannot please his eye,  
 I'll weep what's left away, and weeping die.

Luc. How many fond fools serve mad jealousy!

TQ: So - what's the point of this conversation? What characterizes the two women? Any features we should notice?

SRM: It rhymes.

TQ: What of that?

SRF: I don't know about the rhyming, but one thing I notice is that Adriana isn't listening

TA/C: There is a sense of Adriana carrying on - you're absolutely right. Let's take a look at the rhyming again. It's obvious, really.

SRF: Well, they're rhyming with each other.

TA/Q: That gives us a sense of their closeness as sisters. Do they rhyme throughout?

SRF: No - not when they're talking to Dromio.

TQ: Why?

SRF: They're not speaking after each other.

SRM1: It's like they have a private language of their own when they're alone.

SRM2: Seems a bit dubious to me.

TC: How? Develop it - your thoughts are always interesting - or funny; or both.

SRM2: Well it's funny really- it's like they're gay - they're always going on about men.

SRM3: Well that doesn't mean they're gay.

They then read aloud from II ii to line 10, Wherein it is established that Antipholus of Syracuse believes that Dromio of Syracuse had tried to fetch him home to dinner with Adriana, when in fact it had been Dromio of Ephesus.. Then:

TQ: Just on a plot level, what's the purpose of this scene?

SRF: It helps to remind the audience of what happened last.

TA: And remind us of exactly who he is. (They continue reading to line 24, where Dromio is beaten.)

TQ: What's happening here?

SRM: He's beating him.

TQ: Why?

SRM: He's confused and annoyed. (They read through to line 109, very haltingly, confused, clearly not quite getting most of the jokes.) Lines 54-109 of this scene, which will provide the focus of the next two lessons, are reprinted below:

Syr. Ant.: ...But say, sir, is it dinner time?

Syr. Dromio: No, sir, I think the meat wants that I have.

Syr. Ant.: In good time sir; what's that?

Syr. Dromio: Basting.

Syr. Ant.: Well, sir, then 'twill be dry.

Syr. Dromio: If it be, sir, I pray you eat none of it.

Syr. Ant.: Your reason?

Syr. Dromio: Lest it make you choleric, and purchase me  
another dry basting.

Syr. Ant.: Well, sir, learn to jest in good time; there's  
a time for all things.

Syr. Dromio: I durst have denied that before you were so  
choleric.

Syr. Ant.: By what rule, sir?

Syr. Dromio: Marry, sir, by a rule as plain as the plain  
bald pate of Father Time himself.

Syr. Ant.: Let's hear it.

Syr. Dromio: There's no time for a man to recover his  
hair that grows bald by nature.

Syr. Ant.: May he not do it by fine and recovery?

Syr. Dromio: Yes, to pay a fine for a periwig, and to  
recover the lost hair of another man.

Syr. Ant. Why is time such a niggard of hair, being (as  
it is) so plentiful an excrement?

Syr. Dromio: Because it is a blessing that he bestows on  
beasts, and what he hath scanted men in hair, he  
hath given them in wit.

Syr. Ant.: Why, but there's many a man hath more hair  
than wit

Syr. Dromio: Not a man of those but he hath the wit to  
lose his hair.

Syr. Ant.: Why, thou didst conclude hairy men plain  
dealers without wit.

Syr. Dromio: The plainer dealer, the sooner lost; yet he  
loseth it in a kind of jollity.

Syr. Ant.: For what reason?

Syr. Dromio: For two, and sound ones too.

Syr. Ant.: Nay, not sound, I pray you.

Syr. Dromio: Sure ones, then.

Syr. Ant.: Nay, not sure in a thing falsing.

Syr. Dromio: Certain ones then.

Syr. Ant.: Name them.

Syr. Dromio: The one, to save the money that he spends in  
tiring; the other, that at dinner they should not  
drop in his porridge.

Syr. Ant.: You would all this time have proved, there is  
no time for all things.

Syr. Dromio: Marry, and did, sir, namely, e'en no time  
to recover hair lost by nature.

Syr. Ant.: But you reason was not substantial, why there  
is no time to recover.

Syr. Dromio: This I mend it: Time himself is bald, and  
therefore to the world's end will have bald  
followers.

Syr. Ant.: I knew 'twould be a bald conclusion; but  
soft, who wafts us yonder?

TC: There's a few troubles with this. There are so many references to things that are familiar to Shakespeare's audience- he's going on about basting, choleric, the way that Time was depicted as a baldy; a slaphead...What I'd like you to do is to work in pairs: go through the speech, look at the notes which will help you to unravel much of it and find ways through facial expression, through movement, through gesture, to make the humour of it clear to an audience. It's what any actor would have to do in rehearsal.

[OC: Throughout this there are a number of question as they plough through the footnotes, re: choleric, basting, etc. The teacher tells them that the purpose of this

focus is to compel them to look at this bit which might otherwise be glossed over. The intention is to have the four different versions presented and critiqued by the group.

Strangely, the girls who are working in pairs according to the rules come upon the references to syphilis, sexual intercourse and prostitution long before the boys, who appear to be faffing about somewhat. They grow suddenly quiet upon overhearing one of these revelations, which they might have found out for themselves had they been working with the footnotes. The teacher approaches at this point to gauge progress of the work] One girl responds:

SRF: We haven't thought about the gestures yet - we've just been working through exactly how it's funny.

SRM: It just isn't funny - that's the problem.

TC: So what would you do with this scene in production? Just cut it?

SRM: Cut the word "Comedy"; just call it "Errors"

(General laughter.)

TRD: No matter what you think of it, I'd advise you to run through it. We're not aiming for performance, we're aiming for being absolutely clear - over the top.

They carry on, despite protests that "It's just not funny". Their OTT gestures are causing much hilarity, particularly among the boys. The teacher stops them:

TS: Just watching you; it's going rather well. It should be clear from what you're doing for deaf people to understand you. It's a good rehearsal technique to go over the top, and then later to tone down what needs toning down to use in an actual performance. We'll rehearse for another minute, then see some performances.

We begin with Mitch and Rowan. Interestingly, they incorporate more visual puns than are actually designated in the text; i.e. plain and plane as in aeroplane- an anachronism; however it does indicate a sense of the task assigned. Visual gag on "excrement" is inappropriate and is commented on by the teacher:

TS: We all know about excrement, don't we? It's something that grows out from the body - in this case, hair. (He also points out favourably their good use of deixis.)

Two girls go next. Their reading indicates that they can understand what they've said, but their reading is virtually free of gesture. They are complimented on the clarity of their reading.

SRM: It's difficult, very difficult making it funny.

SRF: Yes- you can't just look at your watch when he asks "Is it dinner time?" because they didn't have watches then.

TA: Yes. I liked the way you looked at the sky there - Mitch and Rowan's was by contrast a modern dress production - they had license to do that.

Next - two boys; Nick and Kevin. Their performance very like the other two boys, with gratuitous visual puns on "dealer" and a bit of penis pointing at every use of the word "man". Deliberately stilted vocal reading, but again, in keeping with the assignment to be OTT.

TA/Q: Good. Any idea of how you might actually perform this?

SRM: Don't use us!

SRF: It's difficult balancing out the words and gestures, you would have to even it out. You find yourself stopping all the time to make the gesture. It's difficult making it flow.

[OC: This past session, which has focused on the particularly difficult problem of translating archaic humour into a playable performance has given student a good deal of insight into both actors' and directors' dilemmas. One thing which has emerged very clearly is the fact that the actor/director must thoroughly understand the piece, to the last footnote in order to give an intelligent and intelligible performance. This may appear to be patently obvious, but compelling students to actually work through the particulars of an especially obscure bit of comic text in a rehearsal situation does more to boost their understanding than any amount of line by line explication.]

### Field Notes \_ Lesson XVIII C

Teacher: Teacher D

Time: 9:40 - 10:20 am Tuesday 12 May, 1992

All Present.

We begin with a recap of yesterday's activities; straight into the last pair of girls and their performance. It is clear that verbs such as "basting" and nouns such as "time" and "hair" are the ones most often mimed. The difficulty arises with quibbles, particularly on adjectives. They discuss what they perceive to be the problems:

SRF: Pauses... when you're thinking about the next gesture.

SAM: It should come naturally

TQ: What would we arrive at in that speech, in performance?

SRF: I think it should be really OTT.

SRM: The danger is that you draw people away from the dialogue. You want them to listen as well as watch.

TQ: Why?

SRM: Because it's no sense calling it "The Comedy of Errors" by Shakespeare if no one is listening to the words and just watching the gestures.

TA/Q: That's a good point. In this particular sense is there something that's important to the rest of the play, or just a bit of comic interlude? What's important about it?

SRF1: Plot-wise it's important; the comedy and timing is important.

SRF2: The food bits are important, and there's a lot about syphilis and prostitutes; it gives you the time of day.

SQF: Is it because it's about the time before the families have been split?

TA/R: Yes, that is important.

SQM: Hasn't Egeon only got three days or something to live?

TQ: Is it three days?

SRM: He's only got the rest of the day.

TA: So Egeon's running out of time.

SRDF1: I'm sorry to have to say this, but I think I speak for myself as well as others when I say I don't understand what's going on.

SAF2: The thing I don't understand is why Egeon's in trouble in the first place.

TR: It's all in the Duke's first speech - let's have a look at it. (Reads this speech through:)

"For since the mortal and intestine jars  
Twixt thy seditious countrymen and us,  
It hath in solemn synods been decreed,  
Both by the Syracusians and ourselves,  
To admit no traffic to our adverse towns;  
Nay more, if any born at Ephesus  
Be seen at Syracusian marts and fairs;  
Again, if any Syracusian born  
Come to the bay of Ephesus, he dies;  
His goods confiscate to the Duke's dispose,  
Unless a thousand marks be levied  
To quit the penalty and to ransom him."  
So what are the Dukes of Ephesus and Syracuse really doing?

SRM1: They're in a war situation.

SRM2: They're banning trade with one another's countries.

The next few minutes are spent re-capping the story so far.

TQ: So far we've seen one Antipholus and both Dromios. What were we talking about before we decided that we didn't understand anything?

SRM: Time. Time is important.

TA: Yes - time is running out. I'd really like to find out who's still finding it confusing.

SRF: It's easier than most Shakespeare.

SRM: I think I understand it.

SRF2: I think that stupid production we saw helped a bit.

TQ: A good production would help you more. How many times have you read it? Let's be honest about that.

The general consensus - once only, and a few perhaps have not yet at this point read it through to the end.

TS: I did ask you to re-read it over the break, and it's been a long time since we read Act I.

SRF: I do understand it - it just gets confusing sometimes.

TQ: Why does it get confusing?

SRF: There's a lot of confusion in it.

TA/RD: That's what a lot of comedy is based on - and there are, after all two sets of twins. I think we can all do with reading it again. Let's talk about the setting: things we are sure about.

At this point a student suggests use of an Elizabethan set similar to one used in a recent Bristol Old Vic production of Romeo and Juliet; then Nick suggests:

SRM: A court.

TA/C: Good - Nick wants a more stylized court; how about Act I, scene ii? This is where you want to convey a sense of strangeness - how?

SRF: I see it as a fish market.

SRM: I see it like those village sets like in the film; The Holy Grail - all very close together, crowded shops.

TQ: What about Act II, scene i ?

SRM: You could have a set that revolves, with Adriana and Luciana intertwined in such a way so that when they revolve, they reveal their other side.

TQ: What does it say in the text about the setting?

(A girl reads out the description of the setting on page two of the Arden edition: "The play is set in Ephesus. The scene throughout represents an unlocalized street or 'mart' in front of the three 'houses', structures or doors marked with the signs of the Courtesans's house, (a Porcupine), the house of Antipholus of Ephesus (the Phoenix), and the Priory (a cross or some religious emblem.)" Can we re-read the text for the next session? because it's confusing, but not so much so if you read it over again.

### Field Notes - Lesson XIX C

Teacher: Teacher D

Time: 11:20 - 12:40 pm Thursday 14 May, 1992

All present.

We begin with review of a written assignment set earlier in the week regarding directing Act I of The Comedy of Errors, with discussion focused on Egeon's story as a framing device, then review the events of Act I.

SSF: I thought it might be a good idea to have Egeon actually coming in and out of the story as he played it, acting like God in a way, directing it- then I talked



about what we did with the strangeness of the town, and that idea of the scenery closing in - Rowan's idea - then I wrote about what we did in class with the exaggeration of the gestures in the telling of the story, and I wrote about the costumes, because the two Antipholuses have to be costumed the same, otherwise the Dromios would notice a difference.

TA: Good - you've written mostly about what we've seen and done.

The next girl gives a very similar account. By the time we come to the third girl, she says:

SSF: Mine sounds the same as everyone else's though.

TR: That's because we're writing about a common experience.

We come to Emma, who hasn't done the assignment yet, but is asked to extemporize about the possible applications of the Elizabethan staging used in a recent production of Romeo and Juliet at the Bristol Old Vic for a production of The Comedy of Errors. She gives an elaborate description, then the teacher asks:

TQ: What kind of stage would Comedy of Errors been played on in Shakespeare's time?

SRF: Probably a stage like that.

TS: We need to have a look at the description of the scene in the play; have a look at some models of Elizabethan stages and see how that may be possible. Debbie?

SSF: I talked about using gobbos in the play - in the first act. I always imagine this as taking place in almost complete darkness, I don't know why; but I would want clouds with a gobbo as Egeon tells his story.

TA/Q: That's good - there's a dark feeling to the opening of this comedy. What is your rationale for the clouds?

SRF: They represent memory, don't they?

SRF2: If the clouds were whizzing by very quickly, they could also show the passage of time, with the sun coming up and down.

SSF: Yes - and I thought I wouldn't dress the Dromios exactly the same - I think it's confusing enough for the audience and we should treat them as if they know what's going on. And I think there's something in the lines to suggest that Dromio of Syracuse should be a bit more sarcastic - because he's different.

We move on to the next student:

SSM: In the first Act I have a shadow play but there are walls on either side so that when we see it, it's like a projection of Egeon's thoughts. When the Duke comes on, I want him high up, but seated on a throne. When Antipholus has that speech about the jugglers - I think he should have a really bright light, suspended from above, but the people around him in total darkness, then each one would be dimly lit as they talked about it.

And the next:

SSM: I talked about maybe using puppets to tell Egeon's story. I also thought about having the Duke's voice come over on a speaker system, so it could reverberate around the audience. Like Claire, I see the play as being very, very dark. Most of it, in fact; particularly this opening bit.

TA: Making the Duke invisible gives him more power, makes him more God-like. Nick?

SSM: I haven't finished, but I have an idea about the scene in the market place. Have the market place sounds coming over on a loudspeaker, but the actual people could not speak at all - the only people who actually speak are Dromio and Antipholus; it could be very unnerving.

TA/C: There's been a lot of fruitful thought here - one thing I think we've forgotten though is in thinking like directors about sets, lights and costumes, you've forgotten your actors - How, even if your Duke is a disembodied voice reverbing around the auditorium, how is he going to deliver his lines? What degree of pity or compassion will you allow him to show? What, as a director, is your briefing to the actors? That's your next assignment. Give yourselves a week, and remember, in the rehearsal hall, your first duty is to your actors.

### Field Notes - Lesson XX C

Teacher: Teacher D

Time: 11:20 - 12:40 pm Monday 18 May, 1992

Present: Five females; two males.

Class begins with a discussion of last minute details of the class trip to Spain - gratuitous request to have class outside (a gloriously sunny day).

TS: Claire was asking questions about time - which brought us back to the first Act and landed us again in that confusion...we've got to talk about what we'll do with that confusion from the audience's point of view, and time: Egeon's time is running out.

SRF: So he'll only get till nightfall.

TA/Q: Yes - and even though it seems a comedy, a frivolous thing, there is an element of darkness and seriousness. Let's talk about this element of confusion. How does it come about - who's thrown a spanner in the works? Dromio of Syracuse? or Dromio of Ephesus?

SRM: Dromio of Ephesus. We don't see him yet, but it's what he's done that's set things up to go wrong for Dromio of Syracuse.

TS: Alright - let's have a look at the text.

They take parts and read aloud from Act II, ii, 110 - 220; all girls reading.

TQ: What's going on here?

SRF: It's the wife who thinks Antipholus is her husband, and Antipholus and Dromio don't know what's going on, but they play along with it; they're intrigued, and I think they also want some tea.

TQ: What about that line, "We dine too late"?

SRF: There's that sense of time running out again.

TQ: Look at line 125 - 130;

"Adr.: For know, my love, as easy mayst thou fall  
A drop of water in the breaking gulf,  
And take unmingled thence that drop again  
Without addition or diminishing,  
As take from me thyself, and not me too."  
does that remind you of anything?

SRM: Egeon's speech - about how he seeks another drop.

TQ: Can you find it?

After a bit, they find it and the correction is made: it is Antipholus of Syracuse, not Egeon, who speaks the lines. Again, they (probably for the first time for some of them) read the footnotes for this bit of text.

TQ: What's this about, in human terms, this metaphor of the water drop?

SRF1: Marriage.

SRF2: She's like his twin as well- the water can be like a mingling of bloods.

TQ: But what is really being blurred and mingled here, what does Adriana feel is tied up in her Antipholus; what's the focus of confusion in the play?

Various replies are offered: love, feelings, marriage, relationships.

TQ: What about identity?

SAF: Yes - because that's why everyone gets confused; because they've got the same identity.  
(This, finally, by the way, from one of the twins.)

TQ: Why does she feel that he's estranged from himself?

SRF: Because he's not talking like her husband - well, he's not her husband - but she thinks he is.

TS: OK. I'd like you now to list the characters of Act II; what their role is - you need to look at the text closely for this - tell how they relate to other people, what their objectives and aims are when they come on to the stage, then I'm going to ask you to improvise the Act.

SQF: What, today?

TR: Well, it depends on how soon you get this done. I told you to list the characters and their roles - is there a difference?

SRF: The character is who they are, and the role is what they do.

TA/Q: Let's take an example: Dromio of Ephesus. Dromio is his character; what's his role?

SRM: Slave to Antipholus.

TA/Q: So: how they relate to the other characters; how they function. Are we clear on character and role?

While this assignment is being done at their seats, students variously test out their ideas on the teacher. Midway through, the teacher asks:

TQ: Do you think it's helpful, breaking things down in this way?

SR: (Variously): Yes -

SQF: What's going to be on our exam?

TR: Three questions: one on Brecht, a choice of two on Comedy of Errors, and one on things that you've seen.

[OC: The object of this lesson, if I guess it right, is to enable them to discern the theatrical dynamic of conflicting motives; easily translatable into an improv situation - a standard drama class exercise.] At one point:

SQF: But I don't understand - why does Antipholus go along with her? He knows he's got a brother; why doesn't it click that if he's being mistaken for this woman's husband, then it must be his brother's wife?

TQ: What would happen if he did?

SRF1: The play would be over a lot sooner!

SRF2: Maybe he figures he might be this woman's husband - like he got hit over the head and has amnesia.

TA: He does say, "Am I in earth, in heaven or in hell, sleeping or waking?" - So he isn't really sure, is he?

(There is a brief digression while students discuss one student's letter being read out on Radio One; another tells of her appearance in a television studio audience.)

TRD: I'll ask you to tell me about these characters now, and if you want to add, subtract, multiply or divide anything; tell us about your radio appearances - Kev?

SRM: Luciana - Adriana's sister; her role is to comfort her sister.

SRM: Adriana - in the first scene she wants to see Antipholus return, and in the second she wants to prove that she's not an adulteress herself.

TQ: Anyone want to add to that?

SRF1: Her objective is to bring her husband and bring him back home.

SRF2: In the second scene she knows it's him but she doesn't...so her motive is to find out if it is her husband.

SRF3: No, she thinks it's really him.

SRF2: But they must be really thick; they're from different countries, they must speak different languages!

SRF: But if we saw Mr. Richardson [the teacher] speaking Chinese, we wouldn't say, "Look, it's Mr. Richardson's Chinese twin brother!" - we would still think it was him!

SAF3: Yes - we'd think Chinese was his second language.

TQ: What would you think?

SRF1: That it was a joke; a wind-up.

SRF2: But Antipholus of Ephesus must know he has a twin, and he would have told his wife...

SRF1: But only Antipholus of Syracuse knows.

SRF3: Well, I think she's very suspicious because she thinks he's been fooling around on her.

TA/Q: Well, she is wondering where he's been - there is a bit of a subtext to her motive. Do we accept this?

SRF2: You know that naff production that we saw? On the stage it's really easy to understand - that confusion just isn't there.

TS: Another character - Debbie?

SRF: Antipholus of Syracuse - come to find his brother.

TQ: And in scene ii ?

SRF: Antipholus of Syracuse is talking to his own Dromio.

TQ: So what's his motivation?

SRF: He's testing Dromio to see if he's lying or not, he wants a straight answer.

TQ: Another character?

SRF: Dromio of Ephesus. He's the servant to Antipholus of Ephesus. Scene one, his aim is to tell Adriana why her husband's late for dinner.

SRDF: We didn't say what Antipholus of Syracuse's aim was.

TR: To find a mother and a brother is his broader aim...

SRF: And to get his gold to the Centaur via Dromio and in scene ii to find out why Adriana thinks he's her husband.

TRD: Anything else? No ? Well, I'm going to ask you to improvise these. Do you think it helps to know what the characters' objectives are?

SRF: Yes; it really helps to know where you've come from and where you're going.

We are out of time, so improvisations will have to wait until the next class period.

### Field Notes - Lesson XXI C

Teacher: Teacher D

Time: 9:40 - 10:20 am, Tuesday 19 May, 1992

Present: Three males; five females, lower sixth form.

Another glorious day, replete with distracting sunshine. There is a review of yesterday's activities for the sake of one of the boys who was absent yesterday:

TS: ...We decided that for each character there are at least two objectives; a main one that overrides all that they do, and a more specific one pertaining to the situation of the moment - as Emma said yesterday, to the actor on stage, in the rehearsal hall, knowing why you're on the scene should make a difference; knowing where you've come from and where you're going so you're not just mouthing empty words.

Students are then told to split themselves into two groups. One of the girls suggests that they mix the groups so that there are boys and girls in each of them.

TS: The aim of this is that you should be able to leave the text on the table, get up and show us what happens in the scenes in this Act.

A period of quiet talking about how to go about this follows from the group. The teacher directs at this point.

TS: If I were you I would jot it down, stage by stage. Who's on, who's off, what are they doing, what are they talking about on stage, for how long; and try to mirror that in your improvisation.

[OC: Judging from what I am overhearing (i.e. Nick comes in, and talks about why Antipholus is late for dinner) students are still relying on a notion of re-scripting the events of the scenes, concentrating on what happens, more than working mainly from directed motives as to why characters act in the manner they do. Nevertheless, students are receiving a good plot review in having to determine again exactly what happens. This is apparently easier for them, if not somewhat more time consuming.]

Ten minutes into the exercise, one of the groups begins to improvise. Two girls take the parts of Adriana and Luciana and begin to extemporize on men and marriage, largely in the spirit of the text at II,i. The Dromio and Antipholus of the same group are somewhat more reliant on the text, working directly with paraphrase of the lines as written in order to construct a playable alternative to some difficult and obscure comic dialogue.

[OC: It would suggest to me that these students, left to their own devices, have hit upon a way to structure the exercise for future classroom use. The level of intimidation that straight improvisation can entail is alleviated when the paraphrase is used as a preliminary step away from dependence on the text.]

As time begins to run out on the period, both groups have grown quite animated. Due to examination schedules, the coming half-term, and the trip to Spain, there will be no chance to pick up on this for over a week. Before they leave, the teacher reminds them once again of the three examination questions.

## Field Notes - Lesson XXII C

Teacher: Teacher D

Time: 11:20 - 12:00 pm Thursday 4 June, 1992

Present: Two males; five females. Lower sixth form.

The teacher announces Friday week trip to London for a

Comedy of Errors Workshop, then picks up where they left off with their improvisations of Act II, i.

Because of diminished numbers today due to exam re-takes, the groups are re-shuffled. Students are given fifteen minutes to work up their improvs, and reminded of the written work they've already done in terms of character, role and motivation. One student arrives late, having come from matron. Slowly, memory serves them and having re-grouped roughly into the groups they were in before (two boys and two girls in one group; three girls in the other) they begin again. One group is clearly working from the outset; ten minutes into the class, the other group finally begins. This does not go unnoticed by the teacher.

The first group, who are having a go at the scene between Adriana and Luciana get carried so far way from the text that the teacher reins them in, reminding them to pay some mind to the structure of the argument in the text, and the need for improvisation to parallel the same structure.

The second group, clearly in need of some help, begins to fare somewhat better once the teacher again comes around and points out ways in which the improvisation can be structured. Perhaps because this group has the only two boys in the class today (they are outnumbered two to five) the reluctance factor seems higher. The group of girls are clearly much less intimidated by speaking and acting as a group. Eventually, one boy and one girl get stuck into the acting improvisation, the other boy and girl are notably more interested in design than in performance.

At 11:45, the reluctant group are called up to perform first; one of the non-performing students is designated and thanked as their director; the other three set up their scene, with Luciana seated DRC, Adriana DLC; both angled slightly towards each other. Enter Dromio DL.

In their improv, Luciana is clearly more worried about having her meal and painting her nails than she is about where Antipholus might be. A humorous contrast to Adriana's fretting which works very well. One student comments:

SRF: I thought they should have talked about marriage in general a touch more; I would have liked to have seen Mitch's [Dromio's] face.

The next group uses basically the same set-up, only with Adriana seated DRC, and Luciana seated DLC.

The Dromio in this improv is considerably more animated; Adriana more distressed, and Luciana more conciliatory. But they've lost the humour of the contrast between the two sisters' moods evident in the first improv.

SRF: We didn't get off the subject of the marriage enough.

TQ: In terms of getting carried away with the improv; does it change the way you feel about the character?

SRF1: Adriana's a bit melodramatic, very possessive.

SRF2: But we don't know how late he is, it's a cause for concern. But she does seem to overdo it.

SRF1: I think Luciana's younger than Adriana, she's too laid back.

SRF3: She's naive.

SRF1: I think Adriana's naive. It's like she's got this ideal of what marriage should be and she's not prepared to give him any freedom at all.

TQ: How real is this situation?

SRF3: Very real.

SRF2: It could happen today, it could happen in Victorian times, it could happen then; it's just human emotion isn't it? This kind of thing still happens all the time.

TQ: So is Shakespeare writing about us?

SRF4: I think Shakespeare's writing about being human...people still think the same way, do the same things.

TQ: What about the Dromios?

SRF4: He's hard done by. I think it's really mean of Shakespeare in a way to have these two sets of twins and one of them has to serve them all the time.

TQ: Does that still happen?

SRF2: Oh yes. It happened in the slave trade, but even here when we used to have prefects and plebs, there were always people who were beneath other people.

SRF5: I think Dromio's above it really in a way, and he's like a brother to Antipholus. They must know each other inside and out.

#### Field Notes - Lesson XXIII C

Teacher: Teacher D

Time: 11:20 - 12:40 pm, Monday 8 June, 1992

Present: Three males; five females.

The teacher will be discussing students' results on their Theatre Studies mock exam today.

TS: On Saturday I gave out some stage lighting stuff- this is very graphic; very clear...this is condensed from the Francis Reed Book. If you read through it, you'll have a very basic idea of stage lighting. - Now, what went wrong in the exam questions was a question of relevance; there was one question on The Comedy of Errors which people took to be a trick question. It wasn't meant to be and even where people went wrong, they still managed to say some good things. But the main problem was that people were answering in ways that went beyond what the question required. Now - Comedy of Errors - Debbie scored very highly on that because she answered the other question (2B). But the one which tripped everyone up was (2A) because everyone answered it in terms of production...What they're looking for here is ways in which the actors might explore the text. Things like making Antipholus feeling like a stranger in a strange land. We had a lecture about this in which a director talked about a year's rehearsal of Midsummer Night's Dream where he blindfolded his actors and set them loose in New Forest. The point is that it's about rehearsals and everyone answered it as if it were a performance question...ways of exploring the characters, exploring the relationships, exploring the language. It's difficult for us because we're not party to professional productions. But there's nothing to stop us from say, writing to Phillipa Lloyd and asking what she did in rehearsals for her production at the Manchester Royal Exchange. In the third one; the performance question, the problem is you have to know the text. For instance - what would be wrong with



people saying how clever it is to have Grusha and the soldier on opposite sides of the river when they meet again?

SRF: It could be what Brecht wanted in the first place?

TQ: Could be?

SRF: Well it was.

TA: Yes - it's in the dialogue; there are references to the river in the stage directions. The point is that you've got to know what is specified in the script, and what's not before you begin to write about a director's interpretation of that script in production. (the teacher steps out briefly to get their scrips, then continues.) In terms of writing generally about facial expressions and gestures, you'll go a lot further being specific. Tell what gesture with what line. You don't have to worry about this; the whole purpose of a mock exam is to see where we're going wrong. To see where I'm going wrong - perhaps I didn't emphasize enough the need to know the text when answering questions about performance and interpretation, but now we know. For the most part these examinations were very enthusiastic and very knowledgeable, but you mustn't take it to heart if you haven't done as well as you might have. Now - last time we were beginning to talk about the Dromios..

SRF: Yes - we were saying whether or not we thought the Dromios were intelligent; whether they were above it all. I think they are quite intelligent.

TR: Mitch was quite keen on this idea of Dromio being a football - perhaps we could rough Dromio up a bit in one of these trust games in rehearsal. It's off on a tangent a bit, but rock performers use trust games which involve the audience - Peter Gabriel so far as I know pioneered this technique of throwing himself into the audience , sometimes from a twenty foot stage; but back to our performance

SRF: I think when people stage dive at concerts, it's really terrible.

(The discussion goes a bit off the track here, then returns:)

TRD: We started talking about Dromio, but we had things to say about Adriana and Luciana, too. What do we think about them?

SRF: Really, I don't feel I know much about Luciana and Adriana; I only know what we did in the improv.

SRF2: I think Luciana's younger than Adriana.

SRF3: I think she's older.

SRM: I think if Luciana were in the same position, she'd act the same way.

SRF: I think if she were alive today she'd be a geography teacher until she was 60, never married, always giving advice about things she knows nothing about.

TR: You make her sound very unattractive.

SRF: I think she is; maybe that's one of the reasons why she's not married.

TS: Well, we'll find out, won't we?

At this point students re-group to take the second half of the double period working on improvisational interpretations of Act II, ii. The class divides up into two groups, one with three girls; the other with three boys and two girls, and carries on with their work. One group; the girls, begins by first reading straight

through the text among themselves, then branching out into improvisation (the line "I long for grass" forcing them into peals of laughter). The other group, again the mixed group, seems far more reticent, talking more about how they will plan to do it rather than actually doing it.

The first group calls the teacher over to explain "the bit about Time being bald" which they don't quite understand, and wonder how to make relevant in an improvisation. It appears that they have elected to begin and end with the confrontation between Antipholus and Adriana, but at the last minute they decide to begin at the beginning. At 12:30, it's showtime.

Antipholus stands DR, Dromio DRC, and Adriana DL. The improv is extremely animated; Adriana in particular quite OTT in her high dudgeon. The highlight of this improvisation is Adriana's interpretation of the "adulterous blot":

Adriana: (To Antipholus) Quite honestly, if you've been with another woman, then I'm a prostitute!

Dromio: What's she talking about?

The improv is quite funny and well received. The teacher comments, before moving on to the next group;

TA: I think there's a lot in that which captured the spirit of the original.

Group two places Dromio and Antipholus together DL, and Adriana and Luciana DR. Their improvisation is not quite as energetic as the first group's; and is carried more or less on the strength of Adriana's performance. This is, nevertheless, generously received by the others.

TQ: What's the crux of this scene?

SRM: Confusion.

TA/Q: Yes - it's almost mathematical; two sets of twins multiply that confusion. How does it feel to be Antipholus in this scene?

SRM: Confusing, frustrating.

TQ: What's he feel about Ephesus anyway, what's he got in his own mind already?

SRM: He thinks it's a strange place; it's frightening.

TQ: What about Adriana?

SRF: You really can't blame her for acting the way she does. She's hurt and confused too, and he doesn't even know her. I feel sorry for her.

TQ: Who do we sympathize with in this scene?

SRM: Everyone, really -they're all victims in this.

Time is out. Students are reminded to read through the rest of the play in preparation for the workshop on Friday in London.

## Field Notes - Lesson XXIV C

Teacher: Teacher D

Time: 9:40 - 10:20 am, Tuesday 9 June, 1992.

All present.

On Thursday morning, this group will be at the Old Vic doing a workshop with Public Parts Theatre Company. On Friday morning, they are told that the bus leaves at 8:00 am for the London Comedy of Errors workshop.

TS: Are we beginning to see how the confusion is generated; who's who in this? (General assent) I want to take us deeper into the language and character in Act III. Start by making your lists of characters, role and motivation - if you've already got character and role from Act II, you can expand on that. (There is a rustle of paper, pens, etc. as students set out their lists.) I was wondering about Antipholus of Ephesus, and there he is! (This is presumably to remind them that Act III is, in fact, the first appearance of Antipholus of Ephesus. The teacher here suggests that character names be written out in full, as the abbreviations are themselves confusing. Apparently, one of the students has included the names John, Paul, George and Ringo in his list of characters.)

TRD: I don't think the Beatles appear in Act III... It's very convenient that the maid in Act III is called Luce, just to confuse you with Luciana.

SQF: So she's not?

TR: No. When you've got your list of characters, don't forget to include their function and motivations.

SQF: So we've actually got to read through the act?

(Bingo. After a time...)

SQF1: So, Dromio of Syracuse and Dromio of Ephesus are together in this scene, so they must know they're twins, right?

SRF2: But they're behind a door -

SQF1: (Perhaps recalling the production seen?) Is this the bit with the fat maid; the kitchen maid?

TR: Yes, but that's a bit further on. How many characters have we got in this act?

SRF1: Ten.

SRF2: Nine.

SRM: Eight.

SRF3: Nine.

TQ: Nine, ten, ten, nine; how many have we got?:

SRF: (She reads out her list) - Oh. That's nine.

TS: We're all agreed on that? Nine characters? And there are nine of us - what a coincidence! Guess what I'm going to ask you to do next? (There are no audible groans.) Questions on this paper ask you to look at this play very much from the inside, often as a director, or as an actor...Now, what I want you to do is to choose a character, negotiate between you and this time we're going to work with the

text...I'm not asking you to learn all the lines, but I am asking you to actually do the scene, with the text, as close to performance as you can come.

SQF: So, the text is really like a safety net?

TA: Yes. So first off, read through the text, then make your decisions.

(Midway through this reading:)

SQF: I'm getting a bit confused with this Luce business. Who's Luce?

SRM: The maid.

TR: She doesn't appear in the cast list, but she's Adriana's maid. ( The teacher brings round the book open to Dramatis Personae to indicate confusion in listing of Luce. Ambiguous really, whether she is Adriana or Luciana's maid, though consensus is that she is Adriana's.) If you have a very minor role in the first go round of these, I'd like you to understudy a major role for the second go round.

SQF: Lots of tigers in here, aren't there? Should we do the first scene and then the second scene because it takes a long time to suss the first scene.

TR: I'm going to ask you to study your parts first; to take some notes about what you want to do. Can we get the parts sorted then?

SRF: (One of the twins) I wouldn't mind being Dromio.

TQ: (To the other twin) Do you mind being the other Dromio then? I mean, it's perfect casting.

SRF: (The other twin) O.K. (The twins sort out between them who is Ephesus and who Syracuse. Two boys in the corner of the room opt for minor roles; all others are volunteered.)

TC: How are we going to go about preparing a role?

SRF: Read what they say.

TQ: Then?

SRF: Understand what it means.

TA: Right. So you're going to have to talk with each other, use the notes; use a dictionary.

SRF2: Talk about relationships with other characters.

TA: Why don't you make some notes on that? About gesture, expression, positioning on the stage? I'd like to see the notes you have on this by Saturday; you should have made a good start by then, and make sure you re-read the play by Friday.

\*\*\*\*\*

Time: Friday, 12 June 1992. Day long workshop at The Theatre Museum in London. All present.

Friday morning both Theatre Studies teachers, the lower sixth class and I set out in the school minibus for London. We park the minibus at Heathrow Airport (parking outside the Theatre Museum is virtually nonexistent) and take the underground to Covent Garden. En Route to Covent Garden, much to the teachers' annoyance, three of the boys in the class get off at the wrong stop. There is a bit of frantic shouting out the windows; with luck they will catch up with us later.

We arrive a few minutes late, and are directed downstairs to a large, carpeted workshop room. It is essentially a studio theatre, with seating, a lighting rig, and small thrust stage. Several groups from other schools have already arrived, and are busily working with photo-copied scenes from the play in small groups around the auditorium. We are greeted by the workshop leader, a young woman who has worked as assistant director for an RSC production of The Comedy of Errors. I introduce myself, and ask if she minds if I observe the workshop and take a few notes. Since there are no objections, I find myself a quiet place from which to watch.

The class is seated, given a few photo-copied sheets and assigned parts to take. The workshop leader instructs them to act out the scenes twice; first as farce, then again as "real". Six of the students in the class take acting parts, a seventh student acts as director. The director is instructed by the workshop leader to block the scene without rhyme or reason, "Rather dictatorial, 'because I said so'".

In another corner of the room, Emma is given Adriana's speech at II, ii (Ay, Ay, Antipholus, look strange and frown...) to work on with Lou, the other drama teacher from our school. She is told to emphasize only the iambic pentameter.

The groups are then asked to present their work. Group one reads through III, i - the door scene- this is the group in which six of our students are involved as actors, with the twins taking the parts of the two Dromios. They stand onstage in a ragged circle and read out the lines; one teacher-actor, reading the part of Balthasar, is clearly worlds ahead of the rest of the group in acting ability. (The three lads who got off the underground at the wrong stop re-appear at 11:45, much to everyone's relief.) They are quickly absorbed

into the groups and given tasks to do. Two of them are given II, ii -the scene between Antipholus and Dromio of Syracuse, again, dealing directly with the text, and made to decide for themselves what will happen in the scene.

Meanwhile, the blocking of III,i continues on the little stage. They are given an easel to represent the door. The workshop leader pops out to put a few coins in her parking meter, stopping only to comment that Dromio and Antipholus of Ephesus must address one another during their argument. On the line "But soft, my door is locked" there is a great deal of confusion onstage.

So far, students have been given specific and isolated tasks; one group enjoined to deal only with language, the other only with movement.

The workshop leader returns to lend a hand to the two lads at sea with II, ii:

WLS: Make your first decision, Antipholus: who are you talking to?

They carry on with the scene. On the line "Take thou that" she points out the physical clue. The point of this exercise picks up on a classroom exercise that these lads have done; adding exaggerated gestures to the words.

Meanwhile, Emma reads through Adriana's speech again, this time without the over-emphasis of the iambic pentameter.

The workshop leader at this point instructs her to keep the rhythm and go for the emotion. [OC: Watching the group working on III, i, I find it odd that the group had been given no hint or reminder that Antipholus of Syracuse and Adriana "Dine above"; the presence of another man with Adriana could easily have been made clear without revealing Antipholus' identity - without it, Antipholus of Ephesus' anger has much less to play against.]

Emma is carrying on well, though entreated not to be "too actressy".

Meanwhile, the girls onstage within the house are at a bit of a loss; neither the director nor the actors within seem scrupulously aware of the fact that they are all visible to the audience throughout the scene. Nevertheless, the workshop leader calls a halt to the work and asks to see what the groups have come up with.

WLS: I gave you all specific things to do... all I've said to these people is just block the scene; just put in the movement. Now let's see what different people came up with just working with that.

Our group goes first. The lines are well spoken, but the blocking is somewhat static. Many physical clues are not taken, but what will be made of this, we've yet to see.

Discussion of their presentation follows:

WLQ: Where would you go from here with that scene?

SR: I don't know.

WLQ: What did you find difficult? What about the actors; did you find it difficult being told where to move, but not why?

SR: Yes, I did.

WLQ: Any notes you'd want to give?

SR: The Dromios could have been more outspoken.

WLS: I thought the rhythm was off here and there; the meaning gets lost. The next thing to do would be to go through the text again and make sure you've got it.

Emma is next, giving a rather good reading of Adriana's speech. She takes her seat again, then:

WLQ: Did you have a look at the meaning at all, or did you just look at the rhythm?

SR: We did a bit on the meaning...

WLS: Because for the first 40 minutes or so you'd only worked on the rhythm, but this is a very good example of how clear the meaning can come across just working from the rhythm...For a long time people ignored the rhythm, thinking the rhythm got in the way of the meaning, but more and more we're coming round to thinking that the rhythm actually helps the meaning along.

Next, a group of students from another school, the "reality" group who has been instructed to go for a natural approach to the scene, give their presentation of III, i. Their Dromio is quite able, though a bit "Cor blimey" Discussion follows:

WLQ: We talked about only "reality": what difficulty did you have with that?

SR: Well, the iambic pentameter is really hard to avoid...

WLS: The other problem is that is isn't very "real", is it? Basically the play is a farce; if you go for reality in performance, you're up a gum-tree three minutes into the play.

SQ: What do you find is the biggest obstacle to doing Shakespeare in schools?

WLR: Most schools go too much for reality - they don't have a fair idea of what Shakespeare is really about because it's never come off the page for them.

This ends the morning workshop session. We break for lunch and then return for an afternoon session with a scenic designer.

[OC: There is a good deal of mithering from the students about the rather uninspired leadership of the morning session. To be fair, the workshop leader seemed quite clearly underwhelmed to be there at all, and the students came away from the morning's activities feeling as if they had travelled quite a long way to learn very little. It is hoped that the afternoon will be some improvement on the morning.]

In the afternoon we are told by the designer, who is a young, knowledgeable and enthusiastic chap, that we will be looking at design in general, and Comedy of Errors in particular. He explains the process:

DS: The design must precede the rehearsal process; a raked stage, for example, changes everything. Exits and entrances must be established on the set design before the play can be blocked. The simultaneity of rehearsal and production schedules precludes much of the experimental possibility - everything must be planned in advance. The Rose theatre revealed the extent of space that was available to performers; it was much larger than we'd imagined. Elaborate effects above and below were possible. Particular to Comedy of Errors, the Plautine influence was very important - performances took place in a scaled down semi-circular version of a Greek Amphitheatre.

He then goes through the various steps that designers must go through in order to work up a set for production:

DS: Step one is research. Find out about the influence, the vision, the spirit of the play. Pool ideas from a body of images; sift through discussions with directors. Take into consideration the physical limitations before the budgetary ones. Dare to be bold and theatrical. Resist the temptation to be filmic and naturalistic in the theatre.

Step two is your model; use a 1:25 scale model to try out ideas. Always work in millimetres. There are handy scale rules to save you the calculations: accuracy is everything. Don't put anything on the model you don't want on the set - even masking tape. Most of the hard work is done on the model.

Step three : break down the play. By locale, number of lines, people in the scenes, units in the scene, then colour code it.

At this point, he distributes A4 sheets on which he has broken down The Comedy of Errors into five columns: Act and scene numbers, Location, Number of Lines, Characters in the Scene, this divided into "units" as different character groups enter and exit the same scene; and a final column, headed Title, left blank. We are told that our task now is to come up with a title that aptly describes the emotional essence of each of these units, preferably single words, such as "Despair" or "Confusion" The students are left to their own devices with this. There is initially a bit of floundering, but they are soon focused into a group effort, and they begin to assign a single word "essence" to each of the units in the scenes.



When this is done, we take time out for his slide show presentation of the performance history of The Comedy of Errors. The students are amazed to learn that the Dromio's were "blackened up" until the 1950's, and marvel at the photo of blackfaced Dromios in the 1957 RSC production. Throughout his narration of this slide show, he points out the ways in which all of these productions, despite whatever time the plays are set in, can be dated - the 60's make-up, the 70's hairdos all give it away.

We are then given specific locales to design a production of Comedy of Errors, working together in groups. With large sheets of paper and boxes of coloured markers. The first group is given the task of designing a production in this space which we are now working in. They come up with a very strange concoction, including a shadow play. The pillars in the space are turned into "arms of strength" with a company of "statue people" blending into the background, and giant licorice all sorts on the stage, some Madonna-like tutu contraptions; lots of imagination.

DS: Better to go overboard and reign it in later.

Our group is given a production by the sea, which we set in modern times with gangsters and yuppies.

Another school produces a massive diagram of their production, to be set in the round. They have fairly clear ideas, setting by setting, as to how they'll go about it. The students are all clearly enjoying this. Finally, the designer leaves us with the seven essential questions that every designer must ask himself:

- DS: 1: Do you know the play inside out? Half the time the clues are there.  
 2. Does your design capture the essence of the play?  
 3. Does it illuminate the text?  
 4. Is it visually interesting?  
 5. Are the actors and actresses still the focus of attention?  
 6. Are the production team and director in accord with your scheme?  
 7. Can you afford it?

This afternoon session flies by very quickly. Time is out, and it's back to Heathrow for us to pick up the minibus and drive back home.

\*\*\*\*\*

Field Notes - Lesson XXV C

Teacher: Teacher D

Time: 11:20 - 12:40 pm, Monday 15 June, 1992

All present.

Today, students give their comments on Friday's workshops:

SRF: She [the morning workshop leader] was really patronizing. I felt like she was using us to show what she knew.

SRM: It was all right to do it, as long as we did it her way.

TQ: What conclusions could we draw about our work with her?

SRM: She thought we were crap. We should have done her car in.

TA: Well, quite right really. She was really rather grudging in her praise. I mean she had no expectations whatsoever as to what we could do and seemed rather surprised when Emma could do it well.

SS/QF: Well I'm sorry but she comes on and says, " Oh, I'm the assistant director of Comedy of Errors and I know everything about it" and then she does that and we don't get anything out of it at all. I mean what was the point of that exercise with the last group?

TR: Well, she really was setting them up just to knock them down. Quite a hapless group, really.

SSF2: Really in a lot of ways she just showed us how not to do things. It would have been more helpful if she had helped us; if she had shown us ways how to do it.

TS: As you probably know I did speak with the education officer and told her that we were not happy with what had happened that morning, and she said that they were going to replace the tutor. So she's been sacked from that little number.

The class then picks up their old work on Act III; Emma is asked to explain what task was set for her individually at the workshop; which was to read through Adriana's speech out loud, deliberately over-emphasizing the iambic pentameter. Emma then asks:

SQF1: Do you think we can take parts and read it aloud around the class?

SRF2: I don't see how that can make you understand things better.

TR: It actually makes you determine where the stress will fall.

SRF1: But there are two lines; 118 and 119 which have too many syllables, and when I asked her what to do with it, she said just take longer speaking it.

TR: There usually is a reason for it; for the time being, just try to be aware of it.

They take parts and read the play aloud around the room, at quite a speed. The teacher entreats them to slow down. Finally:

TQ: That should remind us of what happens in Act III; how do the scenes divide themselves?

SRF: In scene one there's a lot more confusion and you've got the Dromios on opposite sides of the door.

SRM: Scene one happens on the outside; scene two's on the inside.

TA/Q: Yes, depending upon how you stage it. But there is a big difference in the feel of those scenes; what about the use of the door?

SRF: It's good because the audience can see what's going on but the Dromio's can't.

TS: It's a question that bears a lot of thinking about. Think how you, as a director, would make use of that. It's the kind of question that you're very likely to be set for exams. ...When you begin to do your work on character, the first step is to know exactly what you're saying. That means paying attention to your footnotes, and in discussion with me or with each other decide for yourselves what does what you're saying actually mean. Where does the accent and the stress fall? I'm asking you to work as actors and directors, directing yourselves.

(The teacher then allots "understudy" roles to the handful of students who have read very minor parts in the Act III read through. They commence to work quietly on their texts, individually asking the teacher for assistance from time to time. Degrees of concentration and attention vary considerably from student to student; it's a very hot day, and this is a double period lesson.)

TS: Once you've made sense of what you're saying, start thinking about where to put the stress - what gestures, what facial expressions you want to add to that. Don't worry too much about where you are on stage yet, because blocking is something we'll come back to when we get you all together back on stage. I want you to be sure of this, so that if I stop you at any particular point when you're reading out your part and ask you what you mean, you should be able to tell me. I don't know about you, but I find that every time I read a play, say, a play like The Winter's Tale which I know exceedingly well, on the 25th reading you're likely to find something completely new in the text.

SCM: It's like watching Neighbours - you watch the morning one and then there's the evening one and I get so much more out of it.

TRD: (Ignores this last comment.) What I want you to do is to prepare this for presentation in class tomorrow. We may want to just read it round the room again, but there has to be some evidence of some work being done on this.

A class trip to see a stage version of Frankenstein is arranged, and then class is dismissed.

### Field Notes - Lesson XXVI C

Teacher: Teacher D

Time: 11:20 - 12 :40 pm Tuesday 16 June, 1992

All present.

TQ: If you've worked out your vocabulary; if you feel you can now make sense of what your character is actually saying, you can begin to fill out your character. What kind of assumptions can you begin to make about them?

SQF: You mean what do we know about our characters so far?

TR: Yes; perhaps if you have a few gaps, for example if you think Balthasar's mainly concerned with money, ask yourself how are you going to convey this? What is it about Adriana that determines the way she speaks or sits or stands?

[OC: There is furious writing all around as he speaks.]

TS: Don't forget their long term and their more immediate motivations; also don't forget the ways available to an actor for conveying these things - from facial expression, gesture, posture, and position on the stage.

[OC:As the writing progresses, students chat quietly among themselves and with the teacher; sometimes with regard to the assignment, and sometimes not.]

TS: You might want to look through and pick up phrases that are particularly pertinent to your character; for example, if I were doing Antipholus of Syracuse, you could take note of what he says about himself, "I to the world am like a drop of water", and then relate that to the way he interacts with other characters. Is there something in Luciana, say, that draws him to her; that relates to his long-term motivations? Dromios might want to think about, for example, do they want to show their lower status in the way they speak? It's a point of realism, too - the Dromios and Antipholuses would have had more or less the same upbringing, and it wouldn't necessarily show in their speech, but that's a decision you would have to make.

SRM: That "drop of water" line relates to just about everything he does, doesn't it? - Floating around like that in a strange land.

SRF: I think Antipholus of Ephesus is a real bossy person, always wanting to get his own way - he's terribly mean to Dromio.

At this point, it is suggested by the students that one of them be "hotseated" in role; Debbie volunteers.

TR: I think we should.

Debbie is then hotseated as Luciana.

SQM1: How old are you?

SRF: Twenty four.

SQM2: Are you tall?

SRF: Yes, and thin.

SQM3: How do you feel about your sister?

SRF: I'm concerned about her.

SQF: What about marriage?

SRF: No, haven't found the right man yet.

SQM: What's your idea of marriage?

SRF: I'll be home for him.

SQF: So you'll be in a really square marriage?

SQM: What's your idea of the perfect man?

SRF: Strong, dependable, reliable.

SQF: Do you think your sister's husband's reliable?

SRF: I think he's alright.

SQF: So you wouldn't mind your husband doing what Antipholus does?

SRF: I think Adriana makes mountains out of molehills. I wouldn't get so worked up about it.

SQF: What do you think of Dromio?

SRF: Well, I like him, but he needs to be kept in line.

TQ: What did you think about your brother-in-law chatting you up?

SRF: I was a bit concerned; a bit shocked really.

SQF: Will you tell your sister?

SRF: I don't think so.

TRD: Maybe you will: I think you will; it says so in the text.

Time is out and class is dismissed.

#### Field Notes - Lesson XXVII C

Teacher: Teacher D

Time: 11:20 - 12:40 pm Thursday 18 June, 1992

All present.

TC: I'd just like to hear what you've done with your characters. What's the [illegible] depth, detail of your characters. Other people can add in, challenge - feel free to disagree with one another. Let's kick off with Kev - tell us about your character.

SRM: The character is Angelo; he's a goldsmith. At the beginning of Act III he doesn't say much of anything, so I figure he's just waiting around for his money.

TC: He's on stage but he's not saying anything, but he still has to move and to act. How can you show what he's feeling when he's got nothing to say?

SRM: Perhaps he can be a bit impatient?

TQ: When's the first time he speaks?

SRM: Line 66.

TQ: Who's he talking to?

SRM: (Thinks about this) I guess Balthasar, because they rhyme.

TQ: What's he reacting to?

SRM: Well, it's not very nice - the atmosphere.

TA/Q:...So if Kev's right, and he's already waiting and he can't get in the house, he's commenting on that. When's the next time he speaks?

SRM: "I'll meet you at that place some hour hence."

TQ: So it's a transaction he's setting up, but how does that tie in with a major theme in the play?

SRF: It's this business about time again.

TA/Q: Yes - a minor character with only a couple of lines in this scene, but still managing to tie in with a major theme in the play. Anything else?

SRM1: Well, at the end of the next scene, he tries to give Antipholus the chain but won't take any money for it.

SRM2: That's because Antipholus is well respected, his word is good enough.

TA/Q: So Angelo's behaviour tells us something about Antipholus too - good. Rowan ?

SRM: I'm doing Antipholus of Syracuse. He has this line, "I to the world am like a drop of water" so he's looking for his mother and his brother, and he takes that through when he meets Luciana and Adriana in the street; he's even more confused, he thinks it's like a dream, and because of this I think he becomes more outgoing, because of this change in the environment. He does things he's never done before. I don't think he's ever had a girlfriend but he tries with Luciana.

TA: Yes, it's like a game and he doesn't know the rules...it would explain why he goes for it with Luciana.

SRM: Luciana's like a god to him "Would you create me anew" ; he wants her to teach him about the world, he's been lost for such a long time, and now he's finally found someone.

TA/Q: "Transform me then" he says; how does that link into a major theme in the play?

SRF: He's an ass, isn't he? No, that's Dromio...he's an ape - he says, "Am I an ape?".

TQ: All this transforming, changing; what's the major theme he's touching on?

SRF: Identity.

SRM: It's weird - this bit where Dromio appears. He's infatuated with this woman, and all of a sudden he wants to get a boat, he wants to go.

TQ: Yes, when Dromio appears. So why is that significant?

SRM: Maybe Dromio represented reality for him.

TA/Q: Yes, and the past. How does he end that interchange with Dromio?

SRM: He's going to block it out of his mind and go.

TA: Yes, "Block my ears to the mermaid's song...There's none but witches do inhabit here." So perhaps Luciana is not a goddess; perhaps she's a witch, and not what she seems. Any more? Any comments on Rowan's character? O.K. Mitch: Balthasar.

SRM: Well, he's hanging out outside the house because he wants his money, and they can't get in, so he tries to cool down Antipholus, because this is going on in the middle of the day.

TA/Q: Yes. He goes on about his wife's virtue and modesty - does that remind you of anything else?

SRF: Yes. Luciana calming down Adriana.

TA: So there's a nice parallel there.

SRM: Yeah. So basically he's like an executive, one of the higher up people in the town, and he tries to keep Antipholus sweet and calm him down.

SRM2: I think he's a bit shady.

SRF: His name reminds me of Turkish Delight.

SQF: Wasn't Balthasar one of the three kings?

TA: So you think he might be a bit of a successful immigrant. Alright. Nick?

SRM: O.K. I'm doing Luce. She comes in in the middle of all this commotion and she's rather headstrong. She doesn't show any respect for Dromio; she doesn't call him "Sir", and she's just not letting anyone in. She's the type of person you wouldn't fire.

TA/Q: She is rather feisty. What makes you think she's got less status than Dromio?

SRM: Well, she's always in the house, and Dromio goes about with Antipholus.

TQ: So you think that butlers or valets or chauffeurs have more status than kitchen maids?

SRM: Yes, definitely.

TR: Good. If you can read through a text like this and pick up these clues just from small moments with individual characters, then you can spread these things out over the whole of the play and pick up the major themes from minor clues.

### Field Notes - Lesson 0

Teacher: Teacher D

Time: 9:30 - 10:10 am Saturday 20 June 1992

Present: Three girls.

Saturday morning session, and a number of students, over half the class have not shown up.

[OC: These were, I suppose, out late on a class trip the previous night.]

As there are only three students in the class, this morning's lesson has been cancelled.

## Field Notes - Lesson XXVIII C

Teacher: Teacher D

Time: 11:20 - 12:00 pm Monday 22 June, 1992

All present.

We pick up where we left off Thursday last, beginning with Dromio of Ephesus.

SRF: I thought he was getting fed up with being beat up all the time. I feel he was getting annoyed that there was another Dromio in his place.

TQ: Do you think he actually suspects that there is another Dromio?

SRF: Well, he says, "The porter for this time, sir, and my name is Dromio", so he believes him.

TQ: There is the chance that he's taking the mickey, but do you think he really believes him?

SRF: Yeah... and he uses over-emphasized gestures when he speaks to show that he's different from Antipholus. He's acting stupid all the time.

TQ: What do you mean by stupid?

SRM: I think he's clever. I think he's more in touch than Antipholus.

TQ: Debbie, why do you think he's clever?

SRF: Because he understands the way his master works and he knows how to work with that.

SRF2: I also looked at what Dromio is called and I came up with a list: ass, villain, drunkard villain, knave - which sums him up, really.

TQ: What about the way Dromio uses language? Does that change your opinion at all about how stupid or clever he is?

SRF: Well, he jokes around a lot - he's very witty.

SRM1: I think he's born into being a slave, so even if he is clever, it won't make any difference because he is still going to be a slave.

SRM2: I think it could be an emotional cover - if he clowns around then the beatings can't hurt so much.

SRF: I think they must both know each other so well because they've been brought up together, but they still must feel obliged to play out their roles.

TQ: Any differences you notice between Dromio of Ephesus and Dromio of Syracuse?

SRF: I think Dromio of Ephesus is more confused.

SRM: I don't know why Dromio of Syracuse is so aggressive behind the door.

TQ: What's the difference in the basis of confusion for Dromio of Ephesus and Dromio of Syracuse?



SRM: For Dromio of Ephesus, his day's been fairly normal up to that point . Dromio of Syracuse has had a weird day right from the beginning.

TA: That's the point. He's a visitor, he's a stranger, so the one has expectations of what it should be like and confusion arises when those expectations aren't met; the other is completely out of his depth...if they had both been brought to a new country it would be a different play.

SCM: But they really weren't that different. Ephesus and Syracuse owned by the same country. Did Shakespeare know that or was he making it up for the sake of comedy?

TR: Well, regardless of how similar the towns may have been historically, people's attitudes about a place can change drastically if you're not a local. Four miles down the road from Cambridgeshire, people will regard you strangely, and don't forget there's a death sentence hanging over the head of people off their own turf. Emma?

SRF: Antipholus of Ephesus; Scene one, Act three. I'm a fairly impatient chap, I'm bad tempered, I'm a womanizer. It's quite obvious why my wife gets fed up with me. I'm friendly with this courtesan; I don't know how friendly. I want to knock the door down but I can't. It's really embarrassing because I've got to bring my friends round to the local guest house for dinner. He takes a lot out on Dromio, he's used to giving orders and seems to be fairly important in the town. His credit's good because the merchant won't take any money for the chain, so he has some status and respect. He likes to get his own back - this business with the courtesan and the chain is just to get up his wife's nose.

TA: That's good. Next?

SRF: Luciana. When she's talking to Adriana in the beginning, she needs to be demonstrated as rather young, but really quite sensible. She knows how to comfort her sister and calm her down.

TQ: What about when Antipholus expresses his love for her?

SRF: I think she's quite surprised really, and a bit worried.

TQ: Anything else?

SRF: She's very honest, isn't she? I mean, she goes and tells her sister. It's not the type of thing you want to tell someone who's already worked up about him being unfaithful.

SRM: But she's being loyal to her sister - if her husband's being a rat, she ought to know.

TQ: Any other motive?

SRF: Perhaps because her sister's always going on about how she can't get a man, well, she can say, "Well look, I can get a man; your own husband fancies me."

SRF": But her argument all along has been that Antipholus wouldn't fool around, and here he is chatting her up; maybe she wants to tell her sister, "You were right about him!"

TA: That's good - there's an irony there that's very comic. She was the one to defend him and now he's coming on to her. O.K. that's good work on character. Let's do it. (Tables are moved and a space is cleared in the centre of the room.) I want you to try and pay attention to the punctuation, keep your motives in mind,

and as far as possible, I want us to try and block this a bit. Let's think about that entrance; anything about the relationships that should be made clear?

SRF: Dromio should be behind me; Angelo next to me since I'm talking to him. [The scene involves Antipholus of Ephesus and his Dromio, Angelo the goldsmith and Balthasar the merchant, approaching Antipholus's house, where, unknown to them, Antipholus and Dromio of Syracuse are within, dining with Luciana and Adriana. They carry on to line 30, at which point Antipholus of Ephesus says to his Dromio, "But soft, my door is lock'd; go bid them let us in."]

TC: O.K. - let's stop here. Two things are happening here: one, you've got to have Dromio here to refer to, and two, when you say "Soft, my door is locked", what must you have been doing?

SRF: Trying the lock.

TA: Right. There's no stage direction, but you can infer it from the text. [They carry on to line 35.]

TQ: O.K. What happened here?

SRM: We were masking each other.

TQ: What should we do about that?

SRM: We should move away from the scene, so the focus is on the door. [They carry on through the long exchange through the door between the two Dromios, to line 80]

TC: It seems to me there's a comic invitation here - this business around line 75; [Dromio of Ephesus's line: A man may break a word with you, sir, and words are but wind; Ay, and break it in your face, so he break it not behind.] what's going on, what should be happening?

SRM: He's "breaking wind".

TA: Yes - you're going to fart in his face.

SRF: Gross.

SQM: Who does it? Dromio of Ephesus or Dromio of Syracuse?

TR: Dromio of Ephesus, I should think; "Words are but wind" should be your cue. [They try it again, flatulently; and carry on to line 85, at which point Dromio of Syracuse is sent off to "fetch ..an iron crow", and Antipholus of Ephesus is left to be calmed by Balthasar and Angelo.]

TS: O.K. - Now Balthasar; you move in here, filling in the gap where Dromio exits. You see, the text does give you the blocking. [They carry on to line 105, where Balthasar's speech ends with a rhymed couplet.]

TQ: Do you think it's right that Angelo is left out of this conversation?

SRM: We can bring him in on it.

TQ: Antipholus, should you be exiting on that final line?

SRF: Yes, I think so. [They run the scene through again from the top, stopping at line 10, realizing they'd forgotten their blocking, then they take it from the top a third time, with memories sufficiently jogged. The third run through goes quite smoothly, with the exception of Luce, who despite a good and colourful

performance, consistently neglects his entrance. Nevertheless, students come away from the exercise feeling quite confident about what happens in the scene.

In the five minutes before the double period ends, they talk over a number of technical problems with their upcoming production of the sixth form play, Dario Fo's Elizabeth.

#### Field Notes - Lesson 00

Teacher: Teacher D

Time: Thursday 25 June, 1992

Most of the class are elsewhere today due to other commitments. At ten minutes to ten, there is only one student in the class. The teacher has gone off to find the other two who should be here. There is a good chance that class will be dismissed. By ten o'clock, the teacher returns empty handed. Class is effectively dismissed. The teacher spends the remainder of the period discussing props and set pieces with the director of Elizabeth, which is scheduled for performance on Monday.

#### Field Notes - Lesson XXIX C

Teacher: Teacher D

Time: 9:30 - 10:10 Saturday 27 June 1992

All present.

Today we are in the theatre, on the set of Elizabeth, to act out Act III, scene ii between Luciana and Antipholus.

TQ: What does that first line suggest? [ Luciana, to Antipholus of Syracuse: And may it be that you have quite forgot/ A husband's office? shall, Antipholus, / Even in the springs of love, thy love-springs rot?]

SRF: That she's talking to him, that he's not on the other side of the room but next to her.

SRM: She's quite angry with him.

TA: Yes, good. Alright then, you enter together, let's take it from the beginning. [They carry on, reading the scene with scripts in hand. Apart from their entrance, they do not move.]

TQ: Fine. What is her advice to Antipholus at the beginning of that scene?

SRM: To stop being such a fart to Adriana.

TRD: Yes, but what specifically is she saying ? Look at line 4 onwards: [He reads it out to them:" If you did wed my sister for her wealth,/ Then for her wealth's

sake use her with more kindness; Or if you like elsewhere, do it by stealth/  
Muffle your false love with some show of blindness...]

SRM: She's saying if you want to have another relationship, do it behind her back.

TQ: What do you think of that advice?

SRM: It's not the sort of thing you'd expect from a sister-in-law.

SRF: Yes, but she does care about her sister; she's trying to protect her from being hurt.

TQ: She may be doing it to protect her sister, but is it good advice? Look at line 12: "Apparel vice like virtue's harbinger;/ Bear a fair presence, though your heart be tainted;/ Teach sin the carriage of a holy saint;/ Be secret false; what needs she be acquainted?" What do you feel about that as advice? Because there's no morality there, is there? It says that if you have an affair, the important thing is to keep it from your partner, What would you feel about that?

SRF: If my sister were having an affair with my husband, I'm not sure I'd want to know.

TQ: Does it change our feelings about Adriana and the advice Luciana gave to her?...It seems to me it's not straightforward, advising her brother-in-law to deceive her sister; it's ambiguous, isn't it? It's something we need to think about. What about Antipholus; do we know what he means by that first line? [Sweet mistress, what your name is else I know not,/ Nor by what wonder you do hit of mine;/ Less in your knowledge and your grace you show not/ Than our earth's wonder, more than earth divine.]

SRM: He doesn't understand why he's so attracted to her.

SRF: He doesn't know why she's having a go at him.

SRM: If Antipholus of Ephesus was having a word with Luciana he'd have to take it in a totally different way. I think that Adriana knows that the other Antipholus is having an affair.

TQ: Can we push it as far as that? Is he having an affair?

SRM: Well, he's got this mistress - isn't that the same as having an affair?

SRF: They don't say that he is having affairs, just if you're having them, keep them behind her back.

TA/Q: So it's conditional, isn't it? If we won't call it an affair as such, what would you call it?

SRF: Flirting; flirtation.

TA/Q: Yes - so this has something to do with the relationship between Antipholus and Adriana...What do you notice about the language in this scene? What has it got that the other parts of the play haven't got?

SRF: It's flowery...

SQM: Is it metaphor?

TA/Q: There's quite a bit of metaphor. What can you say about the language generally?

SRM: It's poetic.

TA/Q: Yes, it's the language of courtship. What about this bit where it says "My dear heart's better part?" What's the significance of that?

SRF: He's looking for someone; he's connecting.

TA/Q: Yes. How does this scene function dramatically?

SRF: It lets you see another side of Antipholus.

SRM: It slows it down a bit.

SRF2: It's a big contrast from the scene before; there are only two people on the stage and there's not a lot of banging on doors.

TA: Yes, good. It's important to keep an eye on how the scene is orchestrated, almost like a piece of music. There's the musical, romantic interlude in the middle of all this confusion; there's still confusion here, but in a different key; at a different pace.

The teacher winds up with a general discussion of Shakespeare's scenic structure; and the variation of tone and pace with reference to Macbeth.

#### Field Notes - Lesson XXX C

Teacher: Teacher D

Time: 11:20 - 12:00 pm Thursday 2 July, 1992

Present: Four females; four males

The students' production of Elizabeth by Dario Fo is over, and the teacher has noticed a suspicious looking tear in the hired blacks. The decision is quickly taken, after some discussion with the students, to be up-front about this with the hire agency. Then they begin with a re-cap of Act III, progressing on to reading parts aloud for Act IV. Three out of the eight students present today have come without their books; nevertheless the double up and read through. The students are clearly physically run-down from their theatrical exertions of the previous weeks - there is much sniffing and coughing, and lines are recited somewhat unenergetically through a laryngitic haze. They read through the opening of Act IV, in which Antipholus of Ephesus is confronted by Angelo the goldsmith, the merchant, and an arresting officer and the demand for payment for the chain (given to Antipholus of Syracuse) is made. They stop at line 85, immediately before the entrance of Dromio of Syracuse.

TQ: Right. What's the business of this whole scene?

SRF: Well, the Goldsmith has given the chain to Antipholus of Syracuse, and he's asking Antipholus of Ephesus for the money but he hasn't got the chain so he won't pay so he's arrested.

TQ: What else is set up here?

SRF: Well, the merchant is owed money by Angelo, so it's doubly important that he gets it.

TA/Q: It's almost like the chain is a symbol of the chain of people who all owe money to one another. What else does this remind you of? Anything you've seen before?

SRF: Egeon needed money in the beginning to pay to the Duke for his life - it's interesting, there are doubles of everything in this play. Not just people, but incidents.

TA: Yes, that's very true. One of the most important things really about this play.

SRF: There seems to be an awful lot about money in here and values too. Everyone seems to be looking for money and asking what things are worth.

TA: Yes - there seems to be kind of "guest" motif, concerning money and values. [They carry on reading till the end of the scene.]

TQ: What's going to happen when Dromio gets the money from Adriana? What's Dromio going to do with the money?

SRF: Once he gets the money, he's going to try to bail Antipholus out, but it won't be the right Antipholus.

TA/Q: Right. Who's the "Dowsabel" who Dromio refers to?

SRF: Isn't that Nell?

TA: Right. Let's carry on. [They read through scene ii, in which Luciana tells Adriana that Antipholus has confessed his love for her, to line 25.]

TQ: When was it we saw Luciana having this conversation with Antipholus?

SRF1: Act II wasn't it?

SRF2: Act III, scene i?

TR: Anyone else? It was Act III, scene ii.

SSF: I just think it's rather tactless of her sister to say well, it really isn't worth it if he's so terrible. She should understand that she's only saying that because she feels so terrible.

TA: Yes, because she comes back with this, "Ah, I think him better than I say..." What about this business of him being "deformed, crooked, old and sere"?

SRM: That fits in with the bit in the beginning about sorcerers that deform the mind.

TA/Q: Yes. It's very interesting; this business of the ability of the place to transform people. What about the way in which Luciana talks about Antipholus's wooing, "...with words that in an honest suit might move"? What about those lines; what are they showing you that might need to be brought out in performance?

SRF: It shows how loyal Luciana is to her sister, because she's not even considering it because it's not an honest suit.

TA: Yes, and also the fact that when she realizes that it is an honest suit, only then will she allow herself to be moved by it. I'd like you to think about this - the staging and the performance, over the holidays, and I'll set you a couple of written questions to have a think about:

1. How, as a director, would you choose to expresss the themes of disorder and confusion in Comedy of Errors?

2. What designs for setting and staging do you feel would work best?

Could you do that for me, and have that ready for the beginning of next term?

\*\*\*\*\*

The long summer holiday came and went. Early in the following Autumn Term, I returned to observe this group, now upper sixth formers, one last time.

### Field Notes - Lesson XXXI C

Teacher: Teacher D

Time: 10:40 - 12:00 pm, Thursday 17 September, 1992

All present; four males, four females; upper sixth formers.

TS: We looked at the escalation of violence in Act IV, and we looked at some of the themes; transformation, for example, and we've started to look at some of the characters' perceptions... I want to re-cap the play so far, looking at the events in terms of characters' perceptions, and I want to do that in terms of improvisation. Just to facilitate that, jot down on these big sheets of paper two acts each, in two groups.

SSF: I think we should have mixed groups, actually, that's the most important thing, actually.

Students agree to mixed groups; one taking Acts I and II; another taking Acts III and IV. Numbers this year are diminished by one; one of the twins having left school entirely. The elegant symmetry is gone. Physically, some of the students appear to have matured quite a bit; one notable haircut on a lad who peeked out from beneath a horrific fringe all of last year.

At 11:25, after witnessing much assiduous writing and the construction of several fabulous paper hats, the presentations begin: Act I: the Duke, seated, UR, Egeon, standing DL, begins:

SQF: [Egeon] I'd like to know what my fate is, please.

SRF: [Duke] You weren't born in this country so why are you here? [Egeon tells her story.]

SRF: [Duke] O.K., I'll give you a week.

TQ: A week?

SQF: [Duke] It's not a week? Oh! A day and a night! A day! Jailor, take him off! (Egeon is led away.)

TQ: Would anyone who isn't in the scene help by prompting? [Enter the Merchant, DL, Antipholus and Dromio DRC]

SSF:[Merchant] What you've got to do is pretend you're from here, because some old bloke just got put in the slammer this morning for not being from around here.

SSM:[Antipholus, to Dromio] Look, go to the Centaur, put my money somewhere safe, then I'll see you back here.

At this point the teacher intervenes to focus the class; seat non-participating students in the audience, and speed up the pace. We carry on to the next scene.

SSM: [Dromio of Ephesus, to Antipholus of Syracuse] You're wanted home for dinner, your wife is waiting!

SQM: [Antipholus of Syracuse] Dinner? Wife? What dinner? Is my money safe?

SRM: What money?

At this point, students in the audience cry "Hit him!, You're supposed to hit him!, Come on, hit him!". Our Antipholus mimes a swipe at Dromio. We carry on to the next scene, between a male Adriana and a female Luciana.

SQM: [Adriana] I'm really worried about my husband. Where is he? He's late again.

SRF: [Luciana] Don't worry, he'll be here.

SSM: [Adriana] Yes, but you know what it's like out on the street, what if he's gone for a bit of the other? [Enter Dromio]

SSM: [Dromio] He's gone crazy; he says he doesn't know who you are.

The next scene is played out between Antipholus and Dromio of Syracuse:

SSM: [Dromio] I'm back, your money's safe. What do you want to do now?

SRM: [Antipholus] So you admit I gave you some money!

SRM: [Dromio] Of course, why wouldn't I? I just did what you told me to.

SRM: What about my wife? My dinner? [Again, there are cries of Hit him! Hit him!] Enter Luciana and Adriana:

SSM: [Adriana] Husband! Come home for dinner!

SQM: [Antipholus] Dinner?

SRF: [Luciana] Yes, dinner! Dromio! Why don't you bring him home?

SRM: [Dromio] Me? I never saw them before!

SRF: [Luciana] Yes you have; we just saw you a minute ago!

SSM: [Antipholus] Well, I don't really know who they are, but I'm hungry, so let's go with them.

The next scene involves Angelo, Antipholus of Ephesus, Dromio of Ephesus, Balthasar, and Dromio of Syracuse.



SQF: [Dromio of Ephesus] You struck me! Why did you hit me?

SRF: [Antipholus of Ephesus] I never did!

SRF: [Dromio] Yes you did - I met you on the mart and you wouldn't come home to dinner. You said you have no wife!

SQF: [Antipholus] What? I never denied my wife! [To Balthasar] Come with me to my house. We'll discuss this over dinner. [Mimes an attempt to open the door] Hmm. My door seems to be locked. Dromio, get them to open the door.

The scene becomes increasingly crowded, as one by one, all eight students are called onto the playing area to take part. At one point, the girl playing Antipholus of Ephesus says during this scene, "It's Antipholus of Ephesus! Let me in!" to which one of the girls watching says, "He wouldn't say that! It would give him away!" The teacher stops them briefly to comment:

TS: Just a quick thought: look how many characters we have on the stage. This is the largest number of characters that we've had so far.

The next scene is played out between Antipholus of Syracuse and Luciana; this time both female:

SSF: [Antipholus of Syracuse] Thank you for having us in for a meal. We were really hungry, and by the way, I really fancy you.

SRF: [Luciana] Well I think it's really mean of you. You're married to my sister! [She stops and breaks character] Oh, this is really awkward. I can't do this!

TR: You're making this harder than it needs to be. You just want to summarize the ideas in the scene; make it really snappy-snappy.

At this point, time runs out on the double period. Despite whatever awkwardness may have filtered into the exercise, it is clear that this group is quite confident in their knowledge of the plot and characters in the play. This lesson will be the last to be observed as a part of this research into A-level Shakespeare teaching.

## APPENDIX D

### Further Comments From Students Responding to the Survey Questionnaire

1. Should be taught in a more interesting way.
2. Learning Shakespeare in Theatre Studies seems a lot more interesting than learning it in English. I find reading out loud and acting out scenes helps me to understand the play much better, and these are a few of the methods we use in Theatre Studies.
2. Although I find Shakespeare difficult at times I do enjoy it, discovering deeper meanings.
3. I think that Shakespeare is extremely important for any student participating on the Theatre Studies course because he is such a significant playwright and actor in his own time. However, I do feel that other, later poets and playwrights are just as important for they've simply built on the foundations that Shakespeare laid, showing new ideas and different, important aspects of theatre.
4. The more you look into the way he writes, then the more you become drawn into the play and begin to understand more. Theatre Studies enables you to act out Shakespeare which I think is important in helping you learn and understand rather than English which is more of just reading the text.
5. Seeing live performances are vital to acquire a sound understanding of the plot so that in the future deeper themes and imagery can be studied.
6. I personally had two English teachers who both taught me Shakespeare. Each teacher took a completely different approach in the way they taught Shakespeare, better preparing me to make my own conclusions about his style relative to modern day situations. I think this fact also allowed me to enjoy his plays more, due to a wider view of his works and not just a restricted view.
7. Helped in some ways in reading other texts, gave a good platform to interpreting other poetry and texts.
8. My English teacher always read out the lead part himself. I think if I had been involved in drama at school and had done a Shakespeare play I would have learned much more than I did in the actual lesson.
9. Not enough categories in the questionnaire. "Don't know" column needed.

Interview with John Salway  
NATE '91 Conference, Plymouth  
April 4, 1991

John Salway is the Artistic Director of the Chalk and Talk TIE group, whose work is primarily geared toward an active exploration of the Shakespeare plays with groups of school children at both the primary and secondary levels. In addition to his work with Chalk and Talk, John Salway has worked extensively with Dr. Rex Gibson on the Shakespeare and Schools research project. I met him while conducting my own investigations into Shakespeare teaching as a participant - observer on his "Four Days that Shake the Bard" active teaching workshop offered at the NATE '91 Conference in Plymouth. A transcript of our taped conversation follows:

DD:... I've read a lot about what you've been doing in "Shakespeare and Schools" working with teachers, and- you were mentioning the kind of the differences that you've had with Rex Gibson-it strikes me that you have a much more theorized practice. What I'd like to know is where does that theory come from, what were your influences and how easily do you see that practically being applied to real classroom practice? What kind of resistance do you get, if any, from the teachers? I'd like to talk about the theoretical aspects basically.

JS: The theory has come from lots of different sources, and that's really the most interesting thing about it. It comes in part from Marxism, so that I have an interest in the notion of ideology, and what the word ideology actually means, how ideology works, having read Althusser, Gramsci, and people like that; the, if you like "Neo-Marxism" of the 20th century, because Althusser was a very important moment, when his work struck the English mind 'round about the beginning of the 1970's, because it was a real shock to the way in which books, texts were traditionally read. The notion that reading itself is a problem, that how you read is actually a problem, that the values that you are discovering are never either wholly personally yours, or wholly implicit in the text, that the reading process is itself a dialogue, between you, your culture, your history, and the particular writer who you're reading: it's a very complex process, the process of reading. And I think that comes from insights into the notion of ideology. So I'd say that Marxism, certainly is, I suppose the fundamental source of the theory. But this is not the only source, or rather it's a Marxism which has taken several guises. Marxism itself has been a very powerful influence in the theatre, notably through the medium of Bertold Brecht, so I happen to be somebody who "met" Bertold Brecht in the 60's and was "switched on" by Brecht at a time when he was still a new discovery in the U.K. You know the Berliner Ensemble had been over in '66, and the aftershocks of that visit were still resonating in the theatre world, so the particular version of Marxism that is mediated through Brecht; certainly Marxism isn't just one thing you know-there are several strands, several mediations of it, and that's quite important to understand. The work of Raymond Williams has been very important to me, because of course it was Raymond Williams who began the whole process of understanding the operation of the text in history and history in the text. He's the guy who started off, who invented cultural materialism. The work that's been done subsequently, in the last three decades, four decades or so have been under the influence of that work of Raymond Williams. So I've found Raymond Williams' work very very powerful particularly of course in the light of his own critical reading of Marxism, which is very interesting. At various moments in his intellectual career he wrestled with Marxism, and

he kept on coming back to Marxism, to re-assess it, and re-evaluate his own position in relation to it. And so there's another source, which is also in itself influenced by Marxism, so in a sense, I can't get away from Marxism.

DD: Any Paulo Freire in there ?

JS: Ah! well, yes indeed Paulo Freire is there because of course again there is somebody who was reading and thinking in the 60's; the theories of literacy, and literacy teaching of Paulo Freire are again a very powerful influence. And also of course the theories about the use of theatre and film of Augusto Baol...

DD: I was going to ask about him next..

JS: Well yes, of course; if you're going to talk about Freire you also have to talk about Baol. So there is another whole set of theoretical influences that I try to absorb into the work. And that whole notion of course of theatre as learning, as a learning medium, which brings us on to another source, which is of course the whole Dorothy Heathcote, Gavin Bolton "school" if you will, which I'm always very critical of, I think there are limitations ...I think that there are very significant limitations in the way that Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton theorize their work

DD: Drama in Education takes them both to task for that...

JS: Yes, and that's a debate that has been going on for some time and has been moving forward in recent years, and I think it's a very interesting debate. And I think it's a debate where really you have to look at this principle of "the universals" for example....

DD: That was going to be my next question..

JS: That's the key; that's the key problem, isn't it? When she talks about her concept of "brotherhoods": the "brotherhood:" of course the very word is problematic- why doesn't she talk about "sisterhood" for example? the "brotherhood" of all those people that have had to leave home and live in a foreign land; the "brotherhood" of all those people whose lives have been broken by a force that comes from outside of themselves; and in a sense, yes, you can see why there's a certain sense in which that's interesting. Of course what's interesting about it, is the possibility of somebody from inside of one culture being able to relate to the experiences of somebody from inside another culture, but you actually have to have the cultures themselves present in some way as part of that negotiation; you can't leap over that, and she suggests that in some way you can, and that's a real problem, that's a real problem for me. I want to implicate different cultural values, different histories, different experiences in the work I'm doing.

DD: On the subject of universals, it strikes me that particularly in the cultural materialist readings of the Shakespeare plays it's caused a lot of brouhaha in the academic circles because people feel that their cherished notions are being assailed; that there are no longer any such things as "universals" and everything is culturally constructed. How do you fit that into your practice, and what kind of reaction do you get from teachers about that?

JS: I don't myself feel that I have solved that problem yet; to me that is still a living problem. I'm actually very conscious that the notion of "the universal" is a problem, but, what I don't do is to reject it in quite the dogmatic way that it was rejected in the late '70's and early '80's by people like Terry Eagleton. Now his position I think has changed actually...it isn't quite what it was. But this wholesale assault, this kind of oppositional stance to liberal humanism this of course was a problem in the way that I related to Rex [Gibson] on the project, because Rex was always wanting to re-integrate everything back into a liberal humanist view of the world..

DD: Yes, he does that in Critical Theory in Education...

JS: Yes,...and he goes through all this, and he ends up ... and in a sense I felt about the book (and I've said this to him so it's no secret) I felt that the book was a somewhat shallow reading of many of those people. Because he really doesn't come to grips with the full force of the critique, and was able to end the book by saying well, actually liberal humanism still stands; liberal humanism is still O.K.

DD: He seemed to imply that critical theory and liberal humanism were more or less the same thing.

JS: What he didn't do was really to make clear in that book, either to himself or to the readers, what the kind of underlying limitations were to a liberal humanist view of the world. Now that's not to say that I can automatically reject the notion of "the universal"; I don't. But we haven't yet discovered it, do you see what I mean? I think we're not in a position to know what is "universal", and I think that is part of the project for the future if you like,...but people have pretended somehow that it has been discovered, when actually it hasn't. In other words what they've done is they've assumed their own particular cultural viewpoint to be universal and of course it's not.

DD: I've read some teachers' writing about this problem arguing that while there may not be "universals" there are such things as "absolutes"; though I don't know if that's merely a question of semantics or not.

JS: I think it probably is, although yes; that's interesting; I've not come across that-

DD: It was in "The Use of English" I think-they devoted an issue to teachers' reactions against people like Graham Holderness. "Absolutes" were things like charity, generosity, that are not-that they feel are not- culturally constructed.

JS: Well, that's nonsense isn't it? That's a very metaphysical conception of those notions. I mean the point is that charity isn't floating around in the world at large, charity is a very Christian notion, and there are particular versions of it.

DD: They were writing about charity as it is enacted in the Shakespeare plays-in Lear for example, they say that the "absolute value" of charity comes through in Cordelia's relationship to her father, and that is not a culturally constructed value.

JS: It's a kind of Christian reading; a very Christian reading of the play- the problem is what you've got to be able to do is to understand the position from which you are viewing; you've got to see yourself looking as well as look.

DD: That's something that came up yesterday, because I went to the seminar on "Ideology and Teaching" and there was a very very strong reaction from some of the teachers around this idea that on the one hand they wanted to engage the students in the text; they wanted them to be "moved, stirred and shaken" as they put it, and on the other hand, they wanted them to be able to stand outside the text to see what it was that made the text the thing it is. How do you find teachers, when you work with them, reacting to that notion; and how do you reconcile those two? Because their criticism of theory is that it gives you very very little in the way of practical advice as to how to incorporate it.

JS: Well, I think there's a sense in which they're right. What I mean by that is I think you actually have to go on a very long journey in order to arrive at the well, if you like, and in effect to find the water you actually have to dig through a lot of soil... and I think you can't just knock on a rock and have the stream come out. And I'm afraid that this is what many teachers imagine you can do. There is no magical way of finding theory. You've got to construct it yourself and it's a long journey, it's actually a long journey: to deconstruct your own culture, to deconstruct your sexuality, to deconstruct your professional identity- all those things that are part of who you are- you actually have to be able to examine them, and it takes a long time to do that I'm afraid. It's a process which never stops, never finishes; that re-reading of yourself, and how you have been made: that's what it is at root. It's a very profound kind of personal investigation, actually, of how it is that you have become the person you are at root, and understanding that while

there are certain accidental, there are certain contingent factors, there are very many which are not; that you have inherited all sorts of things which you're not aware of, which as it were are unconscious, and it's bringing all that into visibility which I think is really important, and this is of course where theatre is so powerful and so important - because what theatre gives us is the means to bring into visibility the invisible: this is of course what Brecht was trying to do, precisely, in his own dramaturgy, in his own writing, his own theatre practice, he was all the time talking about how we needed to visualize the social, to find the social geste in the particular act. How is it that this person behaves in this way? It's not just something that is a fact of their personal nature, it is something which is a fact of their inheritance, their particular culture and history. Let us try and make that culture and that history visible at this moment in time. And I think that's exactly what one is trying to do in the work: for me, I want to see the text in history and history in the text: you get that from Raymond Williams- I want to see how it is that any text -particularly very important and interesting texts like Shakespeare's work- how they have been used in the course of their career, how they are re-implicated in history, how they are re-used, how they are re-defined, how there is a process of development, how the text itself has a kind of a life which traces a particular career, particular ideological career. And looking at the way in which plays have been read and interpreted and produced, you can, as it were, unfold to so some extent some of your own history. You take a play like King Lear, you were mentioning a moment ago for example; now the fact of Tate's version of King Lear, lasting a hundred and sixty years, -the version where he rewrites the ending, and has Cordelia marrying Edgar - the fact of that ending is very very important, and how it was that that lasted, and why it was that it was overturned, why it was in a sense an (inverted commas) return to "Shakespeare's text". Those are really important questions that we have to ask ourselves. Or you can look at Othello- very interesting, the performance history of Othello, there were some very crucial moments in that notably for example the famous I. R. Aldrich performance at Theatre Royal in Drury Lane in 1834 which prompted Samuel Taylor Coleridge to say something like "It's not conceivable that a veritable Negro"...that Desdemona would fall in love with a "veritable Negro", because of course there had been the convention of the Moor as an Arab, as a kind of half Black half White character, not the full thick lips, of course Roderigo refers to the Moor as "thick lips" in the very text..

DD: You see that being "excused" in the preface to the Arden edition.

JS: Absolutely right: exactly- that's why that Arden edition's very interesting because there's a real disturbance in the writing of that- the guy's disturbed, and he doesn't know how to handle it- he knows he's got a problem with it, but he doesn't know quite how to articulate it. But you've got Dominic Salvado writing in the other edition in 1984..not the Cambridge edition-what's the edition...in the Swan edition, he's the first editor to really come to grips with that, but then of course he's Portuguese, he's not English, and I think there's a real significance in that.... Anyway, to me this thing about history, about how history is written, how history is interpreted, how history is re-read and how all those voices which are not heard, which are dominant voices and subordinate voices and marginal voices, this thing about women's history, about the feminist re-reading of history, the discovery of the presence of women in history, the discovery of Blacks in history-these things have a real bearing on this work; they have to be central.

DD: I have a sense too that teachers trying to come to grips with all of that complexity tend to look at a division in the agenda between an emotional engagement and an intellectual engagement, and one of their difficulties is in reconciling those two things- now how do you see your way through that?

JS: Right. Now that to me is the central interest in the problem as it concerns practitioners because I want to somehow re-integrate the intellectual and the emotional: and this brings you right back to Greek theatre- there are practical limitations to that- I want to be able to re-integrate them practically and usefully . So to me, the body and its emotions is part of the territory to be explored : it is also part of the means of exploration as well. It is both territory - it is both what I am exploring- and how I am exploring it. So, to me, the use of physical theatre, the techniques of physical theatre, which I think is really central to my work -and I've only very recently realized that that's true, actually: that physical theatre's

really central to my work. The reason why that's important is because it is actually deeply shocking and subversive; it is deeply shocking and subversive of how we conventionally expect ourselves to behave; of how we conventionally expect to see people using their bodies. So there's a tremendous subversion to the body when it is extended into that kind of anarchic, carnivalesque, terroristic space. And of course as I say those words, it reminds me Bahktin is another theoretical source; he's been a great inspiration to me- and his notion of carnival - I mean he really switched a lot of people on to that idea in the early seventies...and that notion of the body; Bahktin talks about the classical and the grotesque body and these concepts of the classical and the grotesque are just utterly germane to Shakespeare. He never said that, but I was amazed that Bahktin did tremendous work on Dostoyevsky but didn't do a lot on Shakespeare which is astonishing because a lot of what he says about utterances and heteroglossia is just utterly germane to Shakespeare. So this whole thing about the body is really important because what the body does is to kind of shock the mind, surprise the mind, throw the mind into confusion, throw it off course, cause it to want to re-orientate. And this of course happens quite literally, because as we were discussing just coming over, when you work with sixth formers they say "My God, I don't know where I am, I don't understand, what's going on here?" You feel lost-it's that sense of being in a bodily space, in literally a space, which is weird, which is not like normal space, because theatre space is not like normal space (It's very abnormal space actually...) it's like being there, surrounded by these energies, surrounded by the sounds of voices, surrounded by the shapes of bodies, which you've never seen before and you think "Jesus, what the hell is going on here?" So there's that amazing subversive and that terroristic- it's like throwing a bomb into a room -everybody gets "exploded" and feel themselves losing their integrity, losing their definition, losing their sense of where they are and when they are. And it's the power of that which I think theatre can prompt, and that's why to me it is the kind of essence, and the root of the work I do, and I keep on coming back and keep on wanting to try to re-think for myself what it is that theatre is, a constant preoccupation, an obsession if you like. And of course in doing that the other source of theory I suppose; we've mentioned Marxism, we've mentioned its mediations through Brecht, we've mentioned Raymond Williams and Gramsci, and Althusser, and Bahktin of course as well is interesting and also I think is in fact theory of theatre itself; theatre theory is also a part of the sources for my own theorization. Peter Brook, Grotowski, Artaud. I read those people and they disturb me because they are writing and they are thinking in ways that are not within the Marxist tradition but I need to hear them...I need to be disturbed by their work and their ideas because that's how you grow. I also need my own self as teacher, as a theatre practitioner to be shocked and surprised and have problems thrown at me; to have that terrorist coming around and disturbing my life.

DD: One other question that I'd like to ask: because a lot of the cultural materialist criticism takes the examination classes and the system to task, and I read a lot of teachers writing in things like LTP saying that this is a misinformed criticism in that they're not familiar with the ways in which examinations can actually liberate students, because they're looking at the questions and not the answers. Now when you come into contact with teachers who are saying "Come and do a workshop for us, my sixth formers are doing A-level Othello"; how constrained or otherwise do you feel about those requirements?

JS: Well, I feel very constrained because I'm just aware that where I'm working, the front line of my work is not where many other people are, in that I feel that I'm pioneering, and there are not so many other people there with you. You have to recognize, and one has to be realistic about this- you've actually got to find out where people are positioned in order to work with them - you cannot expect them to walk a thousand miles to meet you- in no way is that going to be possible. You can expect them to walk a mile or two if you like, and they always do- I always demand that people are going to make some progress as it were, but this is the difficulty of doing the work, is that you've got to make those assessments; how far you can actually go in terms of challenging, and of course you can get it dreadfully wrong, you can really upset people. I was mentioning at breakfast this morning to some people I was talking to a workshop I did in Derbyshire with some teachers, I was actually working on The Tempest with them and we were working on



Ariel's language when Ariel reports what happened on the ship to Prospero and of course his activity on the ship, his burning on the ship and causing the flame and fire- and in the middle of this particular very physically vigorous game this exercise that Richard and I were doing with them, what did somebody say? A woman suddenly sat down and said, "I can't take this any more- you're destroying Shakespeare's language" and there was a real kind of moment of truth.

DD: How did you react to that?

JS: Well, I couldn't ignore it- it was a sheer grenade thrown into my session by her, literally- it was a bomb that she threw at me, and what I really did was I kind of allowed it to explode. You can't stop it; you can't put your hand in there and have it blown away...everybody has to feel the force of it; what do other people feel about it? So you actually have to get the group to speak: and straight away, there was enormous contention, and disagreement- right away- because there had been this explosion, everybody reacted differently to it, as would be the case, and it was not altogether useful I felt, but, having said that, people would, when they'd gone away from that session, and had time to re-think what had happened, or re-think what had come out of it, it would be part of their own powerful memories of that workshop, and they would take it away and re-examine that experience; I mean who knows what change had happened? You see what's so interesting in a sense there are all sorts of things; throwing bombs; it's terroristic when you don't see the reaction, you don't quite know what the effect of your bomb is, and you see as a terrorist- I don't really want to stretch the analogy too far- you're not absolutely sure what the effects of your actions are. Who knows what the effects are? All you can hope is, that when you've lit the fuse, you'll return; there'll be some kind of return.

DD: We haven't got too much time left- can I just ask you, what's the one question you wish I'd have asked, and how would you have answered it?

JS: The one question I wish you had asked?

DD: The one question you wish that I had asked, and I hadn't- because there is usually one that doesn't quite allow you to say the things that you would like to say...

JS: Nothing occurs to me; nothing really occurs to me that I want to burningly talk about- I mean we've covered a lot of ground, a lot of material- I think that's absolutely fine...Well, the one thing I suppose would be realistically, yes, I suppose there's the one question that just occurs to me- I was discussing this with someone last night: realistically, what are the immediate prospects for a real radical change in the way in which Shakespeare is taught and examined in the educational system? Because that, to me, of course is the bottom line of it. We need to have massive changes in the way in which Shakespeare is examined; that's crucial, absolutely crucial. Now, how to do that is a really interesting question. You see I would actually argue that - and this is going back to theatre again-that we have in theatre not only a means of study, but also a means of assessment. We've got to get away from simply thinking in terms of performance. This is a real problem with the way that people think about Shakespeare. Shakespeare is "page on a stage"; well as far as it goes, that way of theorizing is fine, but there's a lot more to it than merely a page on a stage, and I think that in order to see that, of course, what you have to do is go on the intellectual journey I've been talking about and begin to understand the operation of ideology; the operation of the text in history and the whole notion of the problematic nature of a politicalised reading-because then of course you start searching around for means to realize alternative readings, alternative ways of investigating the texts of the plays. And it's when you start looking at that in a committed way, that you begin to throw up possibilities for new forms of assessment, new forms of examination: that's what we have to do- that's the task. At the moment of course, we're living in an ideological climate which is actually deeply hostile to what I've been talking about; I'm very conscious of that clearly- here we are in 1991, the Tory government's been in power for twelve years, who have been trying to turn the clock back, who have a very narrow, deeply ill- informed, deeply Philistine notion of education in the arts- this affects everybody; this affects us all...



DD: Particularly Shakespeare...

JS: Yes- this whole thing about re-establishing Shakespeare as great literature is what Kenneth Baker was doing; this notion of Shakespeare as Great Literature. Now to me, that is exactly what-that's where I throw the bomb; I throw the bomb at that, at the notion of "Great Literature"; to me that is what has to be exploded. If I can break a single icon, it's going to be that icon of "Great Literature". That's what I want to do, because I want it to be popular literature, and it can't be popular and "Great" with a capital "G". It has to be Shakespeare that is popular; the notion of Shakespeare as popular theatre- there's been some very interesting work that's been done about that- a very interesting book I read by Annabel Patterson-

DD: Yes, I know the one you mean...

JS: Shakespeare and the Popular Voice - Very interesting what that book has to say- so the work is there, around, to be used-...It's the carnival-this notion of carnival; the celebration which at the same time laughs at authority but also understands how it is that authority works, so it's being intelligently subversive; that's what it's about.

DD: And you've got to work that into a new assessment process!

JS: (Laughs) Well yes, it's a difficult project- it's a hard task.

DD: Well. We've got to get back. Thank you very much.

APPENDIX F

SHAKESPEARE TEACHING SURVEY

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Level(s)  
Taught: \_\_\_\_\_

Subject: \_\_\_\_\_

Syllabus: \_\_\_\_\_

PART A: YOUR EXPERIENCE OF BEING TAUGHT AND TRAINED

1. Where did you do your teacher training?

2. Which of these courses did you follow?

\_\_\_\_ Cert. Ed.      \_\_\_\_ B.Ed.      \_\_\_\_ B.A. & P.G.C.E.

3. Was your special subject

\_\_\_\_ English      \_\_\_\_ Drama      \_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_?

4. What is your own most positive memory of being taught Shakespeare (either at school, college or university level)? Please describe.

5. Likewise, what is your own most negative memory of being taught Shakespeare?

6. Of the experiences described above, which would you say most influences your own teaching of Shakespeare, and how?

7. What special preparation were you given for teaching Shakespeare as part of your own teacher training program?

#### PART B:CRITICAL INFLUENCES

1. What, to your mind, is the single most important reason for teaching Shakespeare?

2. What is your reaction to the notion that all students should have access to Shakespeare?

3. What, if any, books of literary criticism of Shakespeare have you found particularly helpful to your teaching?

4. What, if any, performances of Shakespeare (in the theatre, on film, radio, or television) have you found to be influential to your teaching, and how?

5. Have critical influences served to bring about a change of perspective or a perpetuation of ideas you encountered during your teacher training?

(5B cont.)

6. To what extent do you consider Shakespeare to be a political playwright, and the teaching of Shakespeare to be a political project?

#### PART C: METHODOLOGY

1. What, if any, experience do you have of team-teaching Shakespeare with teachers of other subjects? Please describe. Would you be willing to experiment with such methods if you have not yet done so?

2. With which other subject(s) would you most like to attempt a Shakespearean team-teaching approach?

3. Please give a brief description of the Shakespeare teaching methods you currently employ.

4. If you do not already do so, do you intend to incorporate active teaching methods into your practice? What kind of response do you receive/anticipate?

#### PART D: CLASSROOM PRACTICE

1. To what experiences of Shakespeare (i.e. as readers, performers, or audience members) have your own students responded most enthusiastically?

2. What opportunities have your students been given through your school to experience live performances of Shakespeare plays? How are these performances funded?

3. How have you modified (or would you modify) your teaching (through specific preparation and follow-up work) to incorporate and accomodate live performance experiences?

4. What, in your experience, is the greatest obstacle to your students' enjoyment and understanding of Shakespeare?

5. To what extent do you feel that your teaching is constrained by examinations?

(5D cont.)

6. What, if you could, would you change about the way in which Shakespeare is currently taught?

7. How would you imagine the ideal circumstances for Shakespeare teaching?

---

Are you willing for your comments to be attributed?

\_\_\_\_\_Yes          \_\_\_\_\_No

Are you willing to participate further in this project?

\_\_\_\_\_Yes          \_\_\_\_\_No

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

THANK YOU!



6L THEATRE STUDIES - 3 HOURS - 3/6/92

---

Texts of 'The Comedy of Errors' may be used. Notes of performances seen may be used.

ANSWER ALL THE QUESTIONS

1. Brecht advised his actors to "demonstrate the character" to an audience. Discuss what Brecht meant by this and how he expected it to be achieved.

2. EITHER:

a. Discuss some of the ideas which might be usefully explored by the actors and the director during rehearsals for Act II of 'The Comedy of Errors'.

OR:

b. Outline and justify your ideas and designs for either setting or costumes for a production of 'The Comedy of Errors' today.

3. EITHER :

a. Refer to one of the productions you have seen and discuss the director's interpretation, as you understood it. Consider the appropriateness and effectiveness of the approach taken.

OR :

b. Consider your response to the set design of any two of the productions you have seen. Discuss the effectiveness of the designs in contributing to your experience of the performance.

.....

---

**Shakespeare Student Learning Survey**

---

Please check all that apply: I am studying Shakespeare at A-level for: English Literature \_\_\_\_\_ Theatre Studies: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Please place a second check after the subject for which you are answering the questions on this survey.

**Part A**

Please indicate whether you Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree or Strongly Disagree with the following statements:

**1. I believe that the teacher's enthusiasm for Shakespeare is a very important factor in my ability to appreciate the plays.**

*Strongly Agree* \_\_\_\_\_ *Agree* \_\_\_\_\_ *Disagree* \_\_\_\_\_ *Strongly Disagree* \_\_\_\_\_

**2. I believe that all students should have the opportunity to experience a live performance of a Shakespeare play.**

*Strongly Agree* \_\_\_\_\_ *Agree* \_\_\_\_\_ *Disagree* \_\_\_\_\_ *Strongly Disagree* \_\_\_\_\_

**3. I think Shakespeare is boring no matter how it is taught.**

*Strongly Agree* \_\_\_\_\_ *Agree* \_\_\_\_\_ *Disagree* \_\_\_\_\_ *Strongly Disagree* \_\_\_\_\_

**4. I believe that the study of Shakespeare plays at A-level should draw students' attention to the ways in which the plays explore values which are sexist, racist, and elitist.**

*Strongly Agree* \_\_\_\_\_ *Agree* \_\_\_\_\_ *Disagree* \_\_\_\_\_ *Strongly Disagree* \_\_\_\_\_

**5. I believe that the Shakespeare plays show us universal truths about human nature.**

*Strongly Agree* \_\_\_\_\_ *Agree* \_\_\_\_\_ *Disagree* \_\_\_\_\_ *Strongly Disagree* \_\_\_\_\_

**6. I believe that Shakespeare is the greatest poet/playwright in the English language.**

*Strongly Agree* \_\_\_\_\_ *Agree* \_\_\_\_\_ *Disagree* \_\_\_\_\_ *Strongly Disagree* \_\_\_\_\_

**7. I think the Shakespeare plays should be taught to students of all ages.**

*Strongly Agree* \_\_\_\_\_ *Agree* \_\_\_\_\_ *Disagree* \_\_\_\_\_ *Strongly Disagree* \_\_\_\_\_

**8. In my opinion, the greatest obstacle to understanding Shakespeare is the difficulty of the language.**

*Strongly Agree* \_\_\_\_\_ *Agree* \_\_\_\_\_ *Disagree* \_\_\_\_\_ *Strongly Disagree* \_\_\_\_\_

**9. I think that Shakespeare is out of date and irrelevant to the lives of young people.**

*Strongly Agree* \_\_\_\_\_ *Agree* \_\_\_\_\_ *Disagree* \_\_\_\_\_ *Strongly Disagree* \_\_\_\_\_

**10. I think it is important to study the Shakespeare plays in school to help keep alive part of our national heritage.**

*Strongly Agree* \_\_\_\_\_ *Agree* \_\_\_\_\_ *Disagree* \_\_\_\_\_ *Strongly Disagree* \_\_\_\_\_

**11. I think Shakespeare examination questions should be eliminated: students can learn as much, if not more, without being examined.**

*Strongly Agree* \_\_\_\_\_ *Agree* \_\_\_\_\_ *Disagree* \_\_\_\_\_ *Strongly Disagree* \_\_\_\_\_

12. I think that Shakespeare should be eliminated from the A-level literature syllabus.

*Strongly Agree* \_\_\_\_\_ *Agree* \_\_\_\_\_ *Disagree* \_\_\_\_\_ *Strongly Disagree* \_\_\_\_\_

13. I think that Shakespeare should be eliminated from the A-level theatre studies syllabus.

*Strongly Agree* \_\_\_\_\_ *Agree* \_\_\_\_\_ *Disagree* \_\_\_\_\_ *Strongly Disagree* \_\_\_\_\_

## Part B

Please check what experiences of Shakespeare teaching you have had as a part of the A-level course you are currently taking as indicated: Frequently (at least once a week) Occasionally (at least once a month) Rarely (once a term or less) or Never

1. Close reading of the text:

*Frequently* \_\_\_\_\_ *Occasionally* \_\_\_\_\_ *Rarely* \_\_\_\_\_ *Never* \_\_\_\_\_

2. Reading parts aloud around the class:

*Frequently* \_\_\_\_\_ *Occasionally* \_\_\_\_\_ *Rarely* \_\_\_\_\_ *Never* \_\_\_\_\_

3. Watching film or video productions, or listening to recordings of the plays:

*Frequently* \_\_\_\_\_ *Occasionally* \_\_\_\_\_ *Rarely* \_\_\_\_\_ *Never* \_\_\_\_\_

4. Any kind of project work, written or otherwise, on topics relating to the plays:

*Frequently* \_\_\_\_\_ *Occasionally* \_\_\_\_\_ *Rarely* \_\_\_\_\_ *Never* \_\_\_\_\_

5. Seeing live performances:

*Frequently* \_\_\_\_\_ *Occasionally* \_\_\_\_\_ *Rarely* \_\_\_\_\_ *Never* \_\_\_\_\_

6. Visits from (or to) educational theatre groups for workshops on the plays:

*Frequently* \_\_\_\_\_ *Occasionally* \_\_\_\_\_ *Rarely* \_\_\_\_\_ *Never* \_\_\_\_\_

7. Acting out scenes, or memorising speeches for recitation in class:

*Frequently* \_\_\_\_\_ *Occasionally* \_\_\_\_\_ *Rarely* \_\_\_\_\_ *Never* \_\_\_\_\_

8. Exploring the plays through active drama work (e.g. improvisation, mime-work, theatre games):

*Frequently* \_\_\_\_\_ *Occasionally* \_\_\_\_\_ *Rarely* \_\_\_\_\_ *Never* \_\_\_\_\_

9. Learning about Shakespeare with other subject teachers (e.g. music, history, art or science):

*Frequently* \_\_\_\_\_ *Occasionally* \_\_\_\_\_ *Rarely* \_\_\_\_\_ *Never* \_\_\_\_\_

10. Performing a role or otherwise participating in a school production of a Shakespeare play:

*Frequently* \_\_\_\_\_ *Occasionally* \_\_\_\_\_ *Rarely* \_\_\_\_\_ *Never* \_\_\_\_\_

## Part C

Now please rate the following experiences in terms of A) How much you feel you learned from each experience and B) How much you enjoyed learning through each experience. Please tick NA if the activity does not apply to your learning experience

### 1. Close reading of the text:

A) I learned a great deal \_\_\_\_\_ I learned a bit \_\_\_\_\_ I learned very little \_\_\_\_\_ I learned nothing at all \_\_\_\_\_ NA \_\_\_\_\_

B) I enjoyed this very much \_\_\_\_\_ I enjoyed this a bit \_\_\_\_\_ I disliked this \_\_\_\_\_ I strongly disliked this \_\_\_\_\_ NA \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Reading parts aloud around the class:

A) I learned a great deal \_\_\_\_\_ I learned a bit \_\_\_\_\_ I learned very little \_\_\_\_\_ I learned nothing at all \_\_\_\_\_ NA \_\_\_\_\_

B) I enjoyed this very much \_\_\_\_\_ I enjoyed this a bit \_\_\_\_\_ I disliked this \_\_\_\_\_ I strongly disliked this \_\_\_\_\_ NA \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. Watching film or video productions or listening to recordings of the plays:

A) I learned a great deal \_\_\_\_\_ I learned a bit \_\_\_\_\_ I learned very little \_\_\_\_\_ I learned nothing at all \_\_\_\_\_ NA \_\_\_\_\_

B) I enjoyed this very much \_\_\_\_\_ I enjoyed this a bit \_\_\_\_\_ I disliked this \_\_\_\_\_ I strongly disliked this \_\_\_\_\_ NA \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. Any kind of project work, written or otherwise, on topics relating to the plays:

A) I learned a great deal \_\_\_\_\_ I learned a bit \_\_\_\_\_ I learned very little \_\_\_\_\_ I learned nothing at all \_\_\_\_\_ NA \_\_\_\_\_

B) I enjoyed this very much \_\_\_\_\_ I enjoyed this a bit \_\_\_\_\_ I disliked this \_\_\_\_\_ I strongly disliked this \_\_\_\_\_ NA \_\_\_\_\_

### 5. Seeing live performances:

A) I learned a great deal \_\_\_\_\_ I learned a bit \_\_\_\_\_ I learned very little \_\_\_\_\_ I learned nothing at all \_\_\_\_\_ NA \_\_\_\_\_

B) I enjoyed this very much \_\_\_\_\_ I enjoyed this a bit \_\_\_\_\_ I disliked this \_\_\_\_\_ I strongly disliked this \_\_\_\_\_ NA \_\_\_\_\_

### 6. Visits from (or to) educational theatre groups for workshops on the plays:

A) I learned a great deal \_\_\_\_\_ I learned a bit \_\_\_\_\_ I learned very little \_\_\_\_\_ I learned nothing at all \_\_\_\_\_ NA \_\_\_\_\_

B) I enjoyed this very much \_\_\_\_\_ I enjoyed this a bit \_\_\_\_\_ I disliked this \_\_\_\_\_ I strongly disliked this \_\_\_\_\_ NA \_\_\_\_\_

### 7. Acting out scenes, or memorising speeches for recitation in class:

A) I learned a great deal \_\_\_\_\_ I learned a bit \_\_\_\_\_ I learned very little \_\_\_\_\_ I learned nothing at all \_\_\_\_\_ NA \_\_\_\_\_

B) I enjoyed this very much \_\_\_\_\_ I enjoyed this a bit \_\_\_\_\_ I disliked this \_\_\_\_\_ I strongly disliked this \_\_\_\_\_ NA \_\_\_\_\_

8. Exploring the plays through active drama work (e.g. improvisation, mime-work, theatre games):

A) I learned a great deal \_\_\_\_\_ I learned a bit \_\_\_\_\_ I learned very little \_\_\_\_\_ I learned nothing at all \_\_\_\_\_ NA \_\_\_\_\_

B) I enjoyed this very much \_\_\_\_\_ I enjoyed this a bit \_\_\_\_\_ I disliked this \_\_\_\_\_ I strongly disliked this \_\_\_\_\_ NA \_\_\_\_\_

9. Learning about Shakespeare with other subject teachers (e.g. music, history, art or science):

A) I learned a great deal \_\_\_\_\_ I learned a bit \_\_\_\_\_ I learned very little \_\_\_\_\_ I learned nothing at all \_\_\_\_\_ NA \_\_\_\_\_

B) I enjoyed this very much \_\_\_\_\_ I enjoyed this a bit \_\_\_\_\_ I disliked this \_\_\_\_\_ I strongly disliked this \_\_\_\_\_ NA \_\_\_\_\_

10. Performing a role or otherwise participating in a school production of a Shakespeare play:

A) I learned a great deal \_\_\_\_\_ I learned a bit \_\_\_\_\_ I learned very little \_\_\_\_\_ I learned nothing at all \_\_\_\_\_ NA \_\_\_\_\_

B) I enjoyed this very much \_\_\_\_\_ I enjoyed this a bit \_\_\_\_\_ I disliked this \_\_\_\_\_ I strongly disliked this \_\_\_\_\_ NA \_\_\_\_\_

## Part D

### Future Plans

1. After A-levels, do you intend to study drama or English at a higher education level?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

2. Would you, simply for your own enjoyment, attend a performance of a Shakespeare play?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

3. Would you consider teaching drama or English as part of your future career plans?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

4. Would you consider working in the theatre as an actor, director, designer, stage manager, etc. as part of your future plans?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Please add any further comments you wish to make on your experience of learning Shakespeare in the space below:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: (dd/mm/yy) \_\_\_\_\_ Male: \_\_\_\_\_ Female: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Year in school: \_\_\_\_\_